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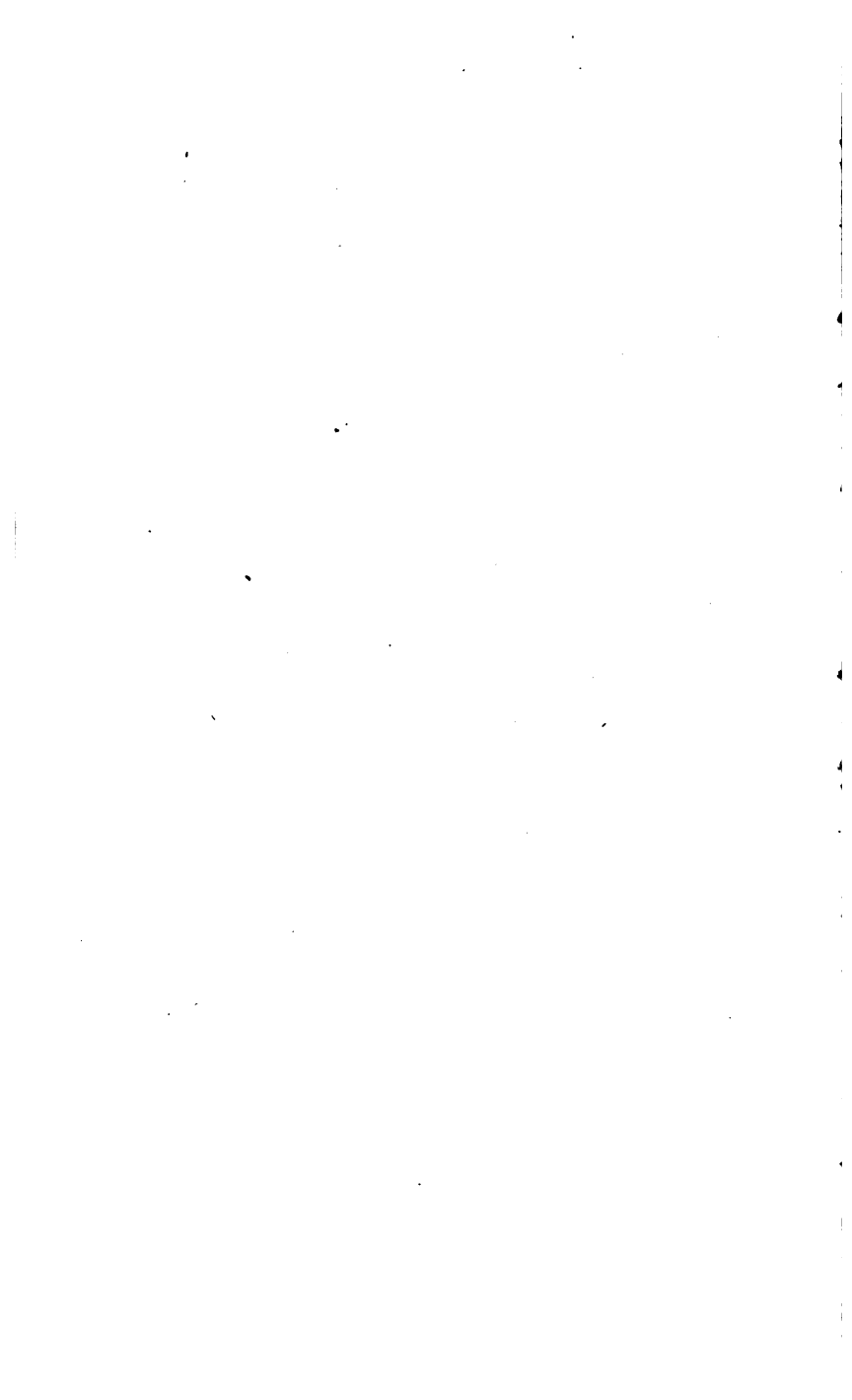
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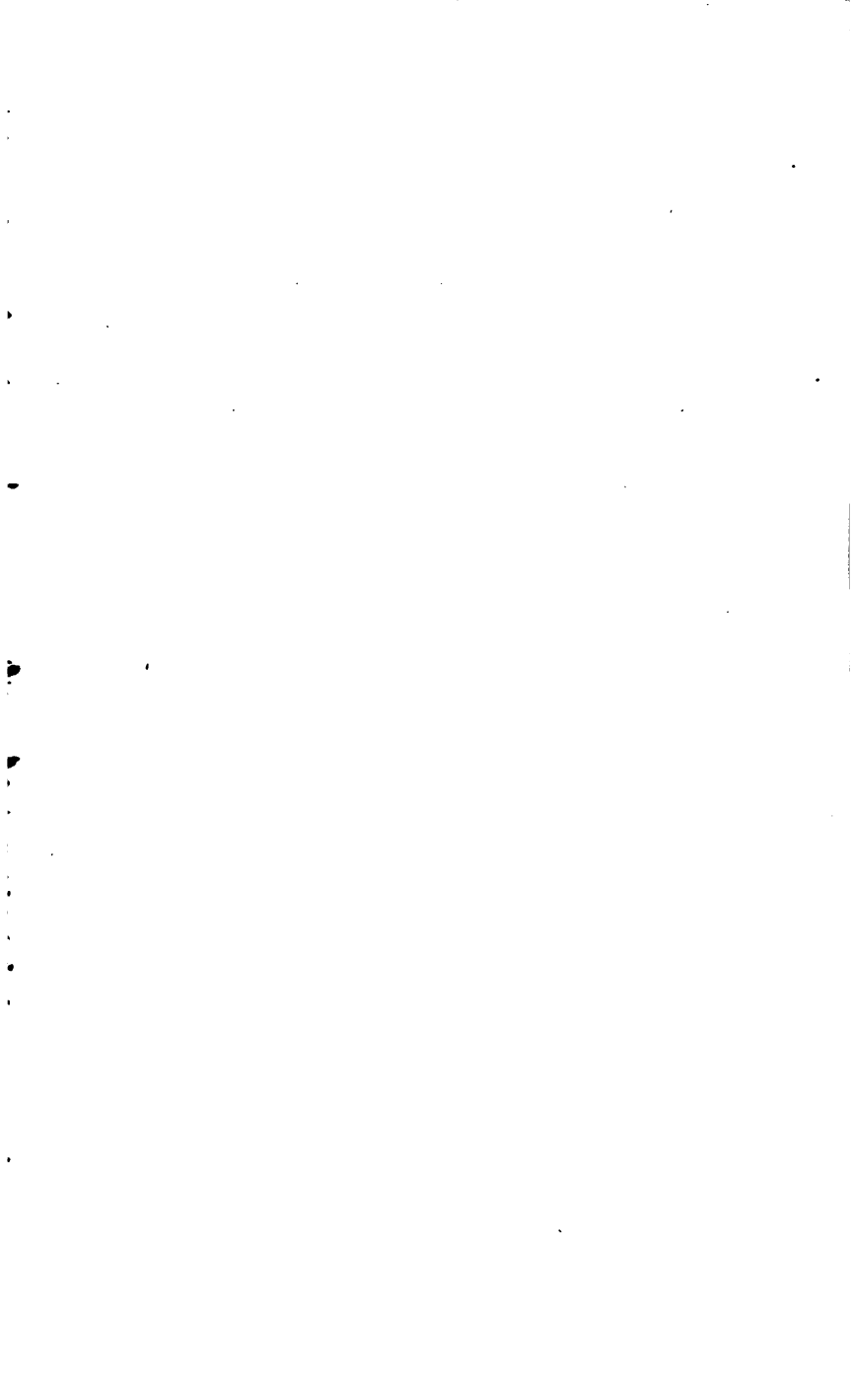
*Novels and
Romances.*

No.

267







Lemo, Lady Maria Theresa (Villiers) List.
H

D A C R E:

A NOVEL.

EDITED BY

THE COUNTESS OF MORLEY.

Un ouvrage d'imagination ne doit pas avoir un bôt moral, mais un résultat moral. Il doit ressembler, à cet égard, à la vie humaine, qui n'a pas un bôt, mais qui toujours a un résultat dans lequel la morale trouve nécessairement sa place.

BENJAMIN CONSTANT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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D A C R E.

CHAPTER I.

In all creation I but know

Two separate worlds : the one, that small,
Beloved, and concentrated spot

Where Lea was — the other, all
The dull wide waste where she was not.

MOORE.

It is surely one of Nature's best gifts to look with delight on Nature's works. The contemplation of fine scenery is one of those enjoyments which can endure when all others have failed. It is open alike to the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the gay and the

TO VIRGIL ALPHEUS

sorrowful. It needs not learning to understand, nor the practised eye of art to admire. We see its beauty—we feel its power—our thoughts are raised—our hearts are purified; and the spirit, thus exalted, bows with gratitude to Heaven for the creation of Earth. We cannot suppose that all who travel, and gaze, and admire, are equally accessible to feelings such as these. There are, of course, degrees in the pleasure derived, and variations in their course, though springing from one source; but, in all, it seems to awaken some exciting sensation. It raises the spirits—it soothes the wretched—it invigorates the languid—it tempts a spirit of adventure—it casts away the petty cares of life, and leaves their prisoner to enjoyment.

We are often disposed to quarrel with the presence of those unrefined specimens of our fellow-countrymen, with whom, travel where we

will—on mountain or plain—on river or lake—by sea or by land — by steam or by coach, we are sure to be molested. The similarity of language makes us conscious of the dissimilarity of manners. Our *amour propre* blushes that others should see that vulgarity, which we perhaps can alone appreciate. We instantly perceive their grade—we do not stop to know their feelings—we think they vulgarise the scene—we ask not if they sympathise in our delight. We turn with disgust from Mr. Simkins's preparations for a pic-nic on the mountains; we say he views the Alps as Richmond Hill; we wish that Mrs. Simkins, with her reticule and parasol, had never quitted the purlieus of London; and then we gaze with romantic admiration on the troop of young students, who loiter, staff in hand and pipe in mouth, before the door,

tricked out in all the fancy foppery of a well studied picturesqueness.

Yet this is not fair. Our prejudices are too easily offended by one, our imaginations too quickly captivated by the other. We do not remember that the mind of the former may dwell in admiration on all around, whilst the thoughts of the latter may be centred in admiration of himself. We think that those whose presence decks the scene will enter best into its charms; and, whilst we loathe the sight of sandwiches and rolls, forget that, though enthusiasm will revive with refreshment, it withers away where frivolity blooms. The details of life can never sound romantic, and even the outset on a mountain expedition will not be exempt from this rule.—“Where is my great-coat?” exclaims one voice. “Don’t forget the telescope!” cries another.

"Is the bundle put up?" "I am sure the mule will kick!" "Nonsense, my dear, you will be tired to death with walking!" "Papa! may I walk?" "Mamma! may I ride?" "Where are the guides?" "Thomas, take care of the children!" "Make haste, or we shall lose the sunset!" "Now, all ready!"—and away go a happy family party, full of frolic, fear, and expectation, to toil up the mountain-side.

It was one fine summer's afternoon, when just such a party had left the inn of a little village in Switzerland, that two English gentlemen desired that a guide for themselves and a mule for their valise might be ready to attend them up the Righi. Whilst these preparations were making, they entered the inn; and first they amused themselves with perusing the impressions recorded in the *Livre des Voyageurs*, of the dangers and wonders of the expedition they

were about to make; and then they listened, with equal amusement, to the conversation of those who were engaged in the discussion of their own feats, intended or performed.

“A most tremendous descent, indeed!” said a little, fat, bald-headed man, who wiped his forehead at the recollection how hot he had been.—“We came down wonderfully well!”

“No wonder,” replied his companion, with the air of a coming joke, “for you came down so often.”

“Come, come, James, remember it was my first attempt, so no jokes on me and my pole.”

“Very true, Mr. Brown, very true; no man succeeds in his first Polar expedition, so I wish you better success next time.”

“*Monsieur a vu le lever du soleil ce matin, n'est-ce pas?*” said a young French traveller in a green shooting-jacket and a willow travelling-cap.

“*Oui, Monsher !*”

“*J'espère que Monsieur en a été content.*”

“*Cette très*—— James! what is *wonderful* in French?” said Mr. Brown, *sotto voce*, to his companion. “*Cette ettonant, Monsher.*” “What an odd idea,” said Brown again, *sotto voce*, “to suppose I should be contented on the mountain !”

The Frenchman announced his intention of going up as soon as his guide was ready.

“*Moi je dis que c'est bieng dangeroo à venir en bas encore,*” observed Mr. Brown, feeling his superiority in having already accomplished the feat.

“*Comment ! Monsieur trouve la descente dangereuse ! Apparemment Monsieur n'a jamais fait la descente des montagnes Russes ?*”

“*Non, Monsher ! je n'ai pas etty dans Russie.*”

“*Ce n'est pas nécessaire, Monsieur ; c'est à Paris qu'on trouve les montagnes Russes. Ah ! ah !*”

c'est une chose à voir, cela ; parlez moi de c'a en fait de descente ! Je parie qu'ici on ne trouve rien de pareil."

Brown had nothing to say to this; for the Frenchman spoke so fast, he could not follow his meaning.

"T., my dear!" said a middle-aged lady to her husband, "don't your knees ache dreadful bad?"

T.'s knees did ache.

"I never felt mine in such a way before."

"Perhaps, Ma'am," said a gentleman who had lately joined their party, "you never walked down a mountain before?"

"Why, I can't say I ever did walk down a *real* mountain before," replied the lady: "but I know what a steep hill is pretty well."

"You have been in Scotland then, perhaps, Ma'am, — or Wales?"

"No, Sir! I can't say that I have ever been much from London before; but many and many

a time have I ran up and down that hill in Kensington Gardens, which, some people who have travelled say, looks for all the world like the *creature* of a volcano."

The two gentlemen were now summoned. "*Tout est prêt,*" said the landlord, with a bow; and, in a few minutes more, Dacre and Mr. Howard had entered upon that undertaking, which they had just heard so amply discussed in the *salle publique*. As they proceeded on their walk, they saw groups of other amateur mountaineers collected round a little chapel: it was that erected on the spot where Gessler fell by the arrow of Tell. They stopped, like the others, to look at what was worth seeing only from its association with the event it records.

"I almost doubt," observed Mr. Howard, as they continued their route, "whether, at the end of five hundred years, the memory of

Napoleon or the Duke of Wellington will be more cherished or renowned in their respective countries than that of this simple mountain hero in his. Time seems to have no power to lessen their interest in his name and deeds."

"Because time cannot lessen their interest in the cause for which he fought," replied Dacre. "Others have fought from ambition—they have fought for power, for profit, or for fame; but this simple peasant fought from patriotism—he fought for liberty, and his name is identified with the cause."

"And Liberty," said Howard, smiling, "is, I know, the goddess of your idolatry."

"Yes!" replied Dacre, "I will not deny my worship, though not quite such an enthusiast as you suppose; for I believe you really sometimes think me capable of wishing to sacrifice my divinity as an offering to herself."

"Many have done so before," replied Mr. Howard; "for there are many whose zeal has outstepped their judgment."

"Probably," said Dacre, "with many the cause of Liberty has not been a matter of judgment."

"I should think certainly not," observed Mr. Howard, "to judge by the patriotism and courage displayed by men of desperate character or fortune."

"There is no doubt," rejoined Dacre, "that this zeal in behalf of others springs sometimes from indifference to ourselves. There is naturally a greater willingness to risk a life that has lost its value to its owner. Perhaps," said he thoughtfully, "the opinions of all are too easily biassed by their feelings; perhaps even the liberality and patriotism of a disappointed man

may be tinged in its course by something of the morbid discontent that lies in his mind."

Mr. Howard did not reply. They walked on in silence for some way. The summit of the mountain was now nearly gained, and every traveller pressed forward to catch a view from the top of the cloudless sunset. It was a striking sight to see its brightness sink behind the mountain-ridge. Dacre lingered long, to watch its glories pass away: but his reverie was disturbed by the prudent suggestions of the guides, not to expose himself, when heated with walking, to the air after sunset; and he followed the example of his fellow-travellers, who had long since retired to the hovel on the Righi Kulm, which is gladly accepted there as an inn.

It often proved fortunate for Dacre, that the mind of his companion was less preoccupied

than his own, and not least so upon the present occasion; for whilst Dacre abandoned himself to the sad enjoyment of his own meditations, Mr. Howard had secured, in the scramble, one of the tiny cabins destined for the accommodation of tourists. It was not long before the hour of refreshment had assembled together all the guests at the *table d'hôte* of the one sitting-room. There was a strange confusion of tongues in that low room; it seemed as if the builders of Babel had there taken refuge.

Dacre was not inclined to talk, but he sat and listened with the interest of curiosity to the various topics started by the heterogeneous company around. Every man seems possessed upon these occasions with a spirit of anecdote and adventure, and the generality insist upon being the heroes of their own tale. All have their hair-breadth escapes to tell; all have attempted

to do more than ever was done before ; all have had something that even added to the difficulty of performing impossible feats. Some, to be sure, have been foiled by the cowardice of guides — others defeated by the enmity of the elements : none have ever been known to flinch from fatigue or fear ; and the quiet man, who dreamed not before that day of greater peril than the English stage-coach, the steam-boat, or the *diligence*, now hears bandied about from mouth to mouth the appalling words of yawning chasm, foaming torrents, hanging rocks, abyss below, tremendous precipices, overwhelming avalanches ; — he hears that, if he would see any thing of the country he is visiting, he must thread his dangerous way through terrors such as these, and encounter the perils of the sudden storm, the timid boatmen, and the ill-constructed boat.

It was after several anecdotes had been told, and several adventures recounted, that Dacre's attention was attracted by the sound of a voice at the further end of the room. He thought it was one with which he was acquainted; but the person was seated on the same side of the table as himself. He could not, therefore, see from whom it had proceeded, and the din of conversation prevented his hearing again with sufficient distinctness, to be certain that it was a tone with which he was familiar.

The repast over, there was a move in the room; and Dacre walked up to the end from whence he had heard the voice which had excited his interest, and was presently greeted, with all the surprise and pleasure of an unexpected meeting in an outlandish place, by Sir Edward Bradford.

Since the visit at Denham, all jealousy towards

Sir Edward had been extinguished. Whether he had or had not been an admirer of Emily's, was a matter of no importance to Dacre from the moment he was sure that he was not likely to prove a successful rival; and from that time he had felt that he owed him some reparation, for the many uncharitable feelings he had previously harboured against him. Sir Edward had always liked Dacre, and their acquaintance with each other had much increased on their return to London subsequent to that visit. Sir Edward was travelling in company with his sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth; and all expressed their pleasure at this unexpected rencontre.

What a crowd of recollections did their presence call into vivid existence! He had never seen Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth before or since

the visit to Hatton, and the sight of them at once recalled in detail every circumstance of that time. He thought on the conversation that had there passed between Emily and himself: he remembered upon one or two occasions the tone of melancholy which he thought had then tinged her remarks. He had since attributed it only to the uncertainty which the Duchess of Bolton had told him she had there felt of his own attachment for her. But now it occurred to him that she had always foreseen the misery and disappointment that had since befallen them: he thought this seeming presentiment of evil was, in fact, the knowledge that it must happen. But still, painfully as these reminiscences and reflections pressed upon his mind, there was a pleasure in finding himself in company with those with whom the thoughts of Emily were

associated, by whom Emily was known, and by whom Emily was loved; and, before they retired to rest that evening, it was agreed that Dacre and Mr. Howard should join their party upon the two or three expeditions which they had just projected.

CHAP. II.

No — never shall I lose the trace
 Of what I've felt in this bright place.
 And should my spirit's hope grow weak,
 Should I, O God, e'er doubt thy power,
 This mighty scene again I'll seek,
 At this same calm and glowing hour ;
 And here, at the sublimest shrine
 That Nature ever rear'd to Thee,
 Rekindle all that hope divine,
 And *feel* my immortality.

MOORE.

It was little more than twilight the following morning, when Dacre and his companion were roused. They were desirous of watching from the earliest dawn the gradual approach of the sun ; and were the first on that morning who found themselves upon the spot where all had

assembled the preceding evening to see its decline. The Righi is generally selected by travellers as the first spot from which they view the wonders of the Alps. It affords a fine panoramic display of the surrounding heights; and the spectator thus acquires some knowledge of the forms and positions of the different chains of mountains.

When Dacre and Mr. Howard first gazed around them, it seemed as if they stood upon an island: nothing was to be seen above but the cold grey outline of the mountain-ridge; nothing below but the curling waves of some vast sheet of water: not a valley was to be traced, not a village to be descried. Had a deluge occurred in the night, it could not more effectually have seemed to efface by flood every object from their view. They had heard of this perfect deception produced by the morning mist

alluded to the evening before, but till now they had found it difficult to believe how complete was the resemblance to the waving waters. The sound of voices was now heard: they turned to look who was coming; a motley crew were seen to hasten towards the spot on which they stood. Sunrise was at hand. The inmates of the two receptacles for tourists came hurrying up, with every imperfection of toilet,—unshaved, unwashed, uncurled, and half undressed: cloaks, coats, shawls, nightcaps, and handkerchiefs were pressed into the service, to conceal the deficiencies which haste had occasioned, or to protect the wearers from the morning chill. The mist gradually arose and dispersed: the heavens were suffused with pink; and now the mountain-top catches from behind the light, and the snow seems to blush at the approach of the day.

“ I never till now,” observed Dacre, “ felt in full force the term of ‘ rosy-fingered morn ! ’ ”

Fresh objects caught the increasing light. The coming day seemed to cast its brightness before, and all stood in silent expectation of that moment when the sun should rear his head above the mountain’s summit. At length the golden rays are seen to shoot above the earth ; a blaze of light appears ; and in the heavens sits the monarch of the day, shedding life and heat on all below. It was a glorious sight —inspiring, yet solemn.

“ There is no religion unaided by revelation which seems to me so natural as the worship of the sun,” remarked Dacre to his companion, as they descended from the spot on which they had so long gazed on that mysterious power.

“ I agree with you,” replied Howard ; “ and it seems a so much purer religion than that

which consisted in deifying our own degrading senses."

Dacre and Mr. Howard now passed nearly a fortnight in company with the Wentworths and Sir Edward Bradford. They had left England just before Lord Kendal's death ; and whilst Howard and Dacre had been travelling in Germany, they had been touring elsewhere. Sir Edward had seen enough, from the time they had met at Denham, to feel no doubt of the mutual attachment between Dacre and Emily. He knew that Lord Kendal's death must have necessarily delayed the fulfilment of any engagement that might subsist, and he thought it probable that Dacre was now travelling on the Continent merely to help the tedious time away that must pass before he could claim her as his bride. Under this impression, he sometimes

alluded to Dacre's return in a manner that was far from agreeable to his feelings.

It did not escape Sir Edward's observation that Dacre was particularly depressed in spirits ; and more than once his sister had told him, she was sure that some cause of unhappiness weighed upon his mind. But Dacre had owned he was not in good health ; and Sir Edward thought that, and his temporary absence from Lady Emily, very sufficient causes for his present dejection. Sir Edward once asked him some trifling questions relating to Lady Kendal. It was evident he did not hear that name with composure. He answered the question in a hurried manner, and then dropped behind, as if to gaze on the scenery through which they had just passed ; and for a while did not again join the party.

At length the time came when they were to

part company. Dacre's spirits had rather improved during this mountain tour. They had traversed many of the well-known passes; and the contemplation of such scenes, together with the constant excitement of bodily exercise, had in some slight degree lulled, for a moment, the gnawing grief which preyed upon his heart.

There is something in the wildness and sublimity of mountain scenery, that tends to remind us rather of eternity than of decay. The perishable works of man are no where to be seen. No city lies in gloomy ruins, to show the outline of its faded greatness — no remnant of a sanctuary here stands to show the worship that has passed away. We see no falling records of the glorious deeds of those, whose names are learnt in history's page. We stand upon the mountain, and we scarcely know that man exists upon the earth. This is not

the land where arts have died, or science been forgot — these rocks never echoed the eloquence of orators, or the song of the poet — these waters never bore the proud ships of the merchant — this soil never yielded to man the fruits of his industry. It is not here that the finger of Time can be recognised. In vain would he set his mark on snows that never melt, or disturb the fast-bound forms of adamantean ice. In vain he stretches out his hand where the rushing torrent, and the roaring waterfall, blest with an eternity of youth, dash on their headlong course, regardless of the blighting power that withers strength, or lulls to rest the creations and the creatures of mortality. Here may we pause, and say that Time has lost his power. Here may we view the faint efforts of Time overthrown in an instant. Changes there are ; but the work of an hour has defeated the slow

progress of decay. The lightning of the thunder-storm—the blowing tempest—the engulfing flood—the overspreading avalanche—have effaced from the surface of nature the impress of Time, and left nought in the change to remind us of age. Surely there are scenes in life which seem created to awaken in mankind the recollection,—that even Time can lose its power. Who will not feel the nothingness of the pleasures—the cares—nay, even the sorrows of our petty span, when, for a moment, he dwells with his heart and soul upon the thoughts of an eternity! Yes! it will sober the gay—it will comfort the grieved.

Thoughts such as these had their influence on Dacre. He tried to fix his mind on hopes beyond the grave, and to trust in immortality for a still higher happiness than that now lost to him on earth.

As Sir Edward perceived some improvement in the evenness of his spirits, he was the more convinced that his sister was wrong in supposing there was any serious ground of unhappiness; and, as they walked out together the evening before they parted, Sir Edward again spoke of his return to England.

“Dacre,” said he, “I hope that you will make up your mind to come forward in public life. I think it would suit you.”

“I am surprised to receive such advice from you,” replied Dacre, half smiling. “I thought you were the last person to advocate the cause of patriotic exertion.”

“Very true,” replied Sir Edward, “so far as concerns myself. I must try to defend the line I have taken; but do not suppose that I would recommend one like you to follow the example of an idle man.”

“Do you repent, then?” said Dacre, wishing to keep the conversation away from the consideration of his own prospects,—“Do you now regret the want of some positive employment?”

“No,” replied Sir Edward, “I will not own that I either repent or regret; for that might imply a willingness to change my manner of life. Perhaps I feel it would have been better, had I originally adopted a different course; but that is nothing to the purpose now—it is too late to change. You are some seven or eight years younger than I am, and these are precious years in acquiring the habits of business and industry.”

“They will be of no avail to me,” said Dacre, musingly. Sir Edward did not hear him.

“I shall rejoice,” continued he, “to see you profit by those years. A man never requires occupation more than after he is married; and

I sincerely hope to see you, not only a happy, but a distinguished member of society."

Dacre was silent for a minute. He struggled to speak with composure, and he did so.

"Bradford," said he, "you misunderstood me; but I thank you for the kindness and the interest you have expressed, and, in return, I must be candid with you. I do not mean to return to England—perhaps never—certainly not for years. I told you the other day I meant to go to Italy. That will be but the beginning of my journey. Ask me no questions," said he, as he saw Sir Edward was going to speak.—"Ask me no questions; it would be painful to answer them. I tell you that circumstances have occurred which have defeated every hope of happiness I had formed. There is no one in England to whom my presence is necessary; and I shall seek in the restless life of con-

stant motion some diversion from my present thoughts."

"I will ask you but one thing," said Sir Edward. "Is there no hope that time may work a change in your favour?"

"None," replied Dacre, in a low but firm voice. "I ought not even to wish it should."

A short pause ensued. Dacre broke the silence. "Bradford!" said he, "there was a time when your presence cost me all the bitter pains of jealousy. If I read your feelings right, you have set me a noble example in your wishes for my happiness. She is free to choose," added he, with some emotion, "and if her choice should fall on you"——He hesitated a moment——extended his hand to Sir Edward——and said, "I will try to follow it."

They shook hands.

"We will not speak on this again," said Dacre.

They had by this time regained the inn, and immediately separated.

A strange tumult of feelings now arose in the mind of Sir Edward. Dacre had been right in supposing that he had been not insensible to the attractions of Lady Emily; but scarcely had he himself become aware of a growing preference towards her, than he perceived that which at once checked his indulgence in a feeling which he thought could not be returned. He was persuaded that Dacre was already the object of her affections, and in that conviction he had tried to regard her with the feelings of friendship. How far he really succeeded might be doubtful; but he thought himself successful, and thought that, in his readiness to go abroad just when it seemed her marriage was most probable, he was actuated by no other motive than his usual desire to be in the society of his sister.

But now a new prospect was opened to his view. The person whom he had regarded as an insuperable barrier between Lady Emily and himself was now removed — removed, he concluded, by her own desire. Dacre was not, then, the object of her affections. He had said she was free. He had said that he ought not to wish that time should make a change in his own favour. Dacre had even hinted at the possibility of his becoming the object of her choice; and Sir Edward was thus released from any scruple on his account in endeavouring to engage the heart that was still free. With these feelings Sir Edward returned, with his sister and Mr. Wentworth, to England.

CHAP. III.

Dans cette assemblée de Rome où se trouvaient Oswald et Corinne, il y avait des hommes qui perdaient des sommes énormes au jeu, sans qu'on pût l'apercevoir le moins du monde sur leur physiognomie. Quand les passions arrivent à un certain degré de violence, elles craignent les témoins, et se voilent presque toujours par le silence et l'immobilité.

Corinne, MAD. DE STAEL.

"ONLY think, girls," said Mrs. Ashby one evening to her daughters, "of my having seen our old friend, Mr. Dacre, get out of his travelling-carriage this afternoon, at one of the hotels in the Piazza di Spagna."

"Who did you say, Mrs. Ashby?" enquired some of the company, eager to know who was to be added to the English *coterie* at Rome.

Mrs. Ashby named him again. Many had heard of him, but it so happened that none present were acquainted with him. Mrs. Ashby perceived her superior advantage.

“ Francis Dacre is an old ally of ours : he is so agreeable ! such a dear creature ! I wonder you don’t know him,” continued she, addressing herself to a fellow-labourer in the vineyard of Fashion : “ he was always every where in London.” A slight emphasis on *he* was very expressive, and the lady felt abashed at not knowing Mr. Dacre.

“ They say he is engaged to be married to Lady Emily Somers,” observed a gentleman.

“ So I understand,” said a lady. “ I believe it was her father’s wish that the marriage should take place immediately, but Lady Kendal, I hear, is a strange person, and would not spare her daughter for a year to come.”

“ How very selfish !” said a third.

“ I beg your pardon,” interrupted Mrs. Ashby ; “ but I believe I may say, on the best authority, that there never was any engagement at all between Mr. Dacre and Lady Emily : just a little flirtation, perhaps, but nothing more — nothing more, I am sure, on *his* side. We know him very well.” And Mrs. Ashby glanced at her eldest daughter as she spoke. The look succeeded. One or two of the company said to themselves, “ Perhaps he is one of Miss Ashby’s admirers.” Julia Ashby said nothing, but looked down when Dacre’s engagement was discussed ; and Miss Cecilia said, with a sweet smile, that he was “ *so nice*.”

Ere Mrs. Ashby retired to rest that night, she had penned, in the neatest of hands, on the pinkest of glazed papers, a pressing invitation to Dacre to dine with them. Dacre had no excuse to offer for declining. The invitation

was accordingly accepted; and not many days after his arrival at Rome, he found himself dining with a select few at Mrs. Ashby's house. The ladies received him with flattering cordiality, and treated him as if he were really the old and intimate friend they had represented him to be; and if ever there was a moment in his life when being thus received by the Ashbys could have been pleasing to Dacre, it was on his first and lonely arrival in a great city, before he had engaged himself in any pursuit, or known with whom (if any) he should be disposed to associate.

They talked of England to him, and they talked of the Molesworths. They knew how much the Harry Molesworths had been liked by the Duchess of Bolton, and Lady Kendal, and others; and so they even talked of *dear Mary*, —ay, the little nonentity, poor little insignifi-

cant Mary Bingley, had risen to the dignity of "dear Mary;" and her pretty *naïf* manner, and her graceful air, and her charming expression of countenance, had all been perceived and appreciated, and she was "*dear Mary*, the friend of our youth." Dacre was amused at this change; but still he liked them better for the tone which they had now adopted, and said to himself, as he quitted the house, "After all, they are pretty, good-humoured girls;" and he accepted a second invitation to their house, for a little *soirée*.

"Just a few friends," said Mrs. Ashby, "have promised to look in upon us on Friday evening—just, you know, in a quiet way, and we shall be *so* glad if you would come."

Dacre went, and was surprised to find that "just a few friends, in a quiet way," were as many people as the rooms would hold, making

the usual hubbub of a crammed assembly. The company was chiefly English, but sufficiently interspersed with the stray inhabitants of other nations, to remind the guests that they were not in London. A card-table was placed in the corner of one of the rooms, and round this table stood a little knot of men, who might be presumed to have betted on the game they were watching with so much interest. It was sometimes whispered that large sums had been lost and won at Mrs. Ashby's; but of that she knew nothing. Mrs. Ashby wished to secure the presence of some of those to whom the card-table was an attraction; and she always said it was so ill-bred to enquire into other people's concerns, that she would not for the world have informed herself of the truth of any such ill-natured rumours.

Dacre had listened with tolerable patience to

all that Miss Ashby had to say of the dreadful fatigue of seeing the sights of Rome. They were all very interesting, and full of recollections, as she said; but then one could not help being tired with seeing so many: and, indeed, after a time, one felt there was a great sameness in these sights — always ruins, or statues, or pictures. There was a want of variety, and the shops were not good. He then turned to Miss Cecilia, and she was, as usual, in raptures with every thing. She did so much like going to all the galleries: it was “such fun!” and then all the old buildings looked “so delightfully melancholy,” and it struck her what “a capital gallop” might be danced in the Vatican library; and the vespers at St. Peter’s were “as good as an opera.”

Mrs. Ashby had cause to be thoroughly well pleased with her daughters. She could not bear to have sisters alike. Twin cherries on one stalk

were so uninteresting, and then only "one style of men" would be attracted; now, she might be sure that those who did not like Julia must like Cecilia, and *vice versa*. Dacre was, however, this evening, equally unattracted by the languid Julia, and the lively Cecilia; and, unamused and unoccupied, he rose from his seat, and sauntered into the small room where cards were going on.

"Dacre, will you bet?" said one of the lookers on, with whom he was slightly acquainted. Dacre approached the table and made the bet.

The mention of his name, which had been audibly pronounced, seemed to have attracted the attention of a stranger who was standing by, for, on hearing it, he immediately turned his head, and for a moment glanced at Dacre. A profusion of dark hair, whiskers, and mustachios gave him the appearance of being either a native of Italy, or of some other nation of the south.

He appeared to be interested in the game, but still his eye was constantly wandering towards Dacre: it was instantly withdrawn when the look was returned. But Dacre felt conscious he was watched. It occurred to him that possibly it was somebody with whom he had been acquainted, and whose name and appearance he had forgotten; and with that idea he looked, whilst the stranger was engaged in whispering to a gentleman who stood near him, to see if he could recognise his features. He began to think he had seen him before, and tried to recollect all the foreigners he had known. Just at that moment the stranger spoke, and in an accent that no Englishman could fail to recognise as that of a compatriot, for not only was the language free from any foreign accent, but partook in some degree of that knowing tone, and slangish expression, adopted by a certain

set in England, and which may be fairly considered (proud distinction !) to be unattainable by any foreigner.

Dacre enquired of the only person with whom he was acquainted, the name of this man ; but he could not tell.

“ I never asked his name,” said he, “ though I have seen him here before. He looks like some English or Irish tiger, with a fine black wig, and a strong turn for play.”

Dacre lost and won a few small sums by way of occupation ; then retired to his lodgings, and fell asleep, whilst still trying to remember where he had seen that face before, and why the stranger had so often fixed his eyes upon him.

Dacre had taken leave of his companion, Mr. Howard, in the north of Italy. He was now quite alone ; and though his loneliness rendered him more than ever a prey to the painful

recollections which dwelt on his mind, he had no inclination to seek for society. Mrs. Ashby was always willing to save him that trouble, by her never-ceasing assiduities to persuade him to join their parties for morning sight-seeing, or evening *coteries*. But he felt more pleasure in contemplating the wonders of art, or the remains of antiquity, alone, than when the chain of thought to which those objects gave rise, was for ever snapped and broken by the inappropriate exclamations of Cecilia, and the misplaced sentimentality of her eldest sister.

Not many days after the evening party at which Dacre had been perplexed by the face of the stranger, he received from Mrs. Ashby an invitation to accompany them to the villa Ludovisi to see the famous Aurora of Guercino. It was only by special favour that admittance

could be there gained, and he therefore accepted the offer. Cecilia thought she should like a pony chaise, "just such a shape as the car;" and Julia said how fatiguing it was to look up. Cecilia pointed out a bit of the drapery that "would be such a nice colour for a gown." Julia, looking serious, whispered something about lovely grouping. (She had learnt that expression since she came to Rome.) Mrs. Ashby put up her glass, and shook her head significantly, and said "Wonderful!" and "Mr. Dacre, I know you can appreciate fine pictures: you and Julia have both, I believe, a passion for the Fine Arts."

Dacre thought how provoking it was to have his pleasure destroyed by such foolish observations; and turned from the subject of the Fine Arts to that of Mrs. Ashby's "few friends," on Friday evening. He asked her the names of

some who had been present, describing their appearance or position, and then describing that of the person he had seen by the card-table, he enquired who he also was. Mrs. Ashby did not know. Miss Ashby never troubled herself to ask the names of strangers: she was always content with old friends; but Cecilia exclaimed, "Oh, Mamma, I dare say it was Mr. Harper."

Dacre enquired if they were much acquainted with him.

"Not yet," said Cecilia, "but we mean to know him well. They say he is just one of those dear odd people, unlike every body else. He is not very young; but they say he is a great traveller, and is so amusing: I do like amusing people so much!"

The name of Harper brought no recollection to Dacre's mind, and he thought he must have

been mistaken, in supposing he had ever seen him before. He gave no reason for having made the enquiry ; and, availing himself of the first opportunity of getting out of the carriage, he took his leave, and was not sorry to find himself once more alone. He wandered to the gardens of a villa, and from thence enjoyed, in full and uninterrupted delight, a view of the city before him. He had been leaning for some time against the balustrade of a terrace. Two people walked by ; but he was endeavouring to make a little sketch of the view, and it was not till they had passed that he looked up. On raising his head he perceived that one of the two was Crofton. He had heard from the Ashbys that he was at Rome : but he had not sought him. They had not yet met ; and he could scarcely help rejoicing that Crofton had now passed him unnoticed. Dacre felt as if the cold sarcastic tone

that pervaded the mind and conversation of Crofton, would not render him an agreeable companion to one who, like himself, was wounded in feeling, and depressed in spirits. They turned down a walk which ran at right angles to that on which Dacre was standing; and as they turned, he perceived that the gentleman by whom Mr. Crofton was accompanied, was the person he had seen at Mrs. Ashby's.

He continued his sketch.

"Dacre ! by all that's wonderful, is that you?" exclaimed a voice close to him, in a tone of surprise.

Dacre looked up : Crofton was close to him, and he thought there was more of cordiality in his manner than he had ever yet testified. Whether his surprise at finding Dacre there was quite so great as it appeared, might be questionable, and Dacre did not think fit to enquire.

Crofton was now alone, and he proposed that they should walk towards their respective homes together.

“Did I not see you go down this walk with another person a few minutes ago?” said Dacre, as they entered the avenue down which he had seen him pass with Mr. Harper.

“I have been wandering about for some time, revelling in the sun,” replied Crofton evasively.

“You were walking I think with Mr. Harper?” continued Dacre.

“With Harper?” rejoined Crofton, hastily.
“Do you know Harper?”

“No,” replied Dacre, “I believe not; and yet I fancied I had seen him before. Who is he?”

“Heaven knows,” said Crofton with a contemptuous smile; “but I don’t believe *he* does, and I am sure I don’t.”

"I hear he has been a great traveller," observed Dacre.

"Yes," replied Crofton, "he has travelled with a good many people, in a good many countries : he is not much of a gentleman, to be sure, but then he is a "character," and that is amusing. Are you going to make any stay at Rome?"

Dacre said his plans were not fixed, and Crofton then enquired after some of their mutual acquaintances, and talked of the deaths and marriages and other events that had taken place since he left England (carefully abstaining from all mention of the death of Lord Kendal, or of Lady Kendal and Emily); and thus the subject of Mr. Harper was entirely superseded.

Crofton called on Dacre the following day, and either by accident or intention they now met frequently. Crofton had lived much in Italy : he was familiar with all the objects most worthy of attention in that country. He was a

man of considerable information, and, though his pursuits were degrading, his taste was refined. He could appreciate the beauties of painting, and the graces of sculpture; his imagination was touched by poetry, and his ear for music was correct. Till now Dacre had known but little of him but by reputation: his reputation was not good, and he thought from what he had seen in England, that his countenance and manner bore the stamp of his character.

It is melancholy to think how often the spontaneous agreeableness of an amusing companion is considered sufficient atonement for the deliberate vices of a profligate man; and though Dacre's virtuous indignation was undiminished against the gambler whose honour had even been suspected, yet in Crofton's society he forgot to be angry with the individual whose character

lay under such an imputation. He could not remember to frown on the man whose sallies had so often called forth a smile. It was pleasant and instructive to be accompanied by Crofton in his morning rambles in search of the beautiful and wonderful ; and Crofton never wounded his sensitiveness by the tone of contemptuous *persiflage* on matters of feeling, which had made him shrink from the thoughts of his society.

“ Dacre ! will you dine with me to-day ? ” said Crofton. Dacre had often done so before. Crofton’s dinners were always agreeable, and he accepted the invitation. After dinner one or two of the Italian guests sung ; and Dacre staid later than usual. Towards the end of the evening, a few men joined the party, and amongst these was Mr. Harper. His eye immediately rested upon Dacre : then walking up to Crofton,

he spoke to him in a low voice. Crofton's reply was, "Leave that to me;" and soon afterwards cards and dice appeared. Some played—others betted: Crofton stood by, whilst the different parties arranged themselves, but without taking any part himself; and then turning to Dacre, he said, "Shall we look on? I think you don't play!"

"No," said Dacre, "my play seldom goes beyond a bet."

"Do you like to bet now?" said Crofton. "Name your sum." Dacre named it. Crofton declared, with a smile, he could not afford to bet so high. The sum was lowered—the bet made—and Crofton won. Another was made, and Dacre won. Other wagers were accepted by both Dacre and Crofton, and then, growing weary of watching the progress of the game on which they had staked their money, Dacre sat

down to play at *écarté* with Crofton. The luck was various, but upon the whole Dacre won. Dacre rose to take his leave.

“I wish you would take all these fellows with you,” said Crofton, in a whisper, “for I am dead tired to-night.

At that moment Mr. Harper advanced: “Now!” said he, in Crofton’s ear. Crofton called Dacre, who had turned to leave the room, and introduced Mr. Harper to his acquaintance. Mr. Harper looked perfectly at his ease, and immediately entered into conversation with Dacre. Crofton turned away.

“Been long at Rome, sir?” said Mr. Harper, in rather a familiar tone.

Dacre mentioned when he arrived.

“Fine old place, Mr. Dacre!”

Dacre assented, and said he had understood Mr. Harper had been a great traveller.

“ Yes, sir ! I have travelled as many miles as most men in my time, but I have grown sick of moving about so often, and I mean soon to be settled for life in England.”

“ Is it long since you were there ? ” said Dacre, more than ever convinced he recognised his face.

“ I left it after the last spring meeting at Newmarket.” A few more sentences passed between them, and Dacre retired for the evening.

There was no play at Crofton’s house for the few next evenings spent there by Dacre. At length the cards and dice again appeared, and many of the same party appeared to play as before. From Crofton Dacre again won. Harper then engaged him, first in bets, and then in play, and to him he lost. Another evening came, and there were fewer people present, and Dacre lost a more considerable sum to Harper. Dacre

had always been peculiarly indifferent to the advantages of wealth ; and till now he never had shown the slightest inclination to gamble : but careless of money, and glad to avail himself of any temporary excitement, he found himself in a short time an inconsiderable gainer from Crofton, and a rather considerable loser to Harper.

CHAP. IV.

Think not thyself better for any thing that happens to thee from without ; for although thou mayst, by gifts bestowed upon thee, be better than another, as one horse is better than another, that is, of more use to others ; yet, as thou art a man, thou hast nothing to commend thee to thyself but that only by which thou art a man, that is, by what thou choosest and refusest.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

“WHAT a delight it is to get one’s English letters!” said Mrs. Ashby, one evening, to Mr. Crofton. “We have had so many to-day.—Cecilia ! my dear,” continued she in an audible voice, “where is that long, agreeable letter from Lady Whitby ?”

The letter was produced, looked over, and a few passages selected for Mr. Crofton’s ear.

“Here is a message to you—I had forgotten

that," said she. " ' Tell Mr. Crofton that we are all very angry at Hexham House being still shut up. He told us he meant to become an English country gentleman, and Lord Whitby is in hopes he will stand for the county. It is such an object to have men of family in Parliament. Our old friend retires after this session, and we are afraid of not being well prepared with a candidate of our own, to stand against those impertinent Bartons : they have been buying all the land they can get in the county ; and have actually had the impertinence to extend their property close to Hatton. The eldest son is now of age, and I suppose he is to be brought forward as a genius, because he has (what they call) distinguished himself at Oxford. The idea of a Barton being distinguished ! It makes me laugh when I think of their *parvenu* pretensions. The Wentworths and Sir Edward Bradford are

come home. Sir Edward was over here the other day: he is now gone to the Duke of Bolton's.' ”

Mrs. Ashby read to herself for some way, then muttering, “ Maria sends her love to the girls, and believe me, &c. &c.” she closed the letter, saying, “ That’s all I think that may be read out,” and looked at Mr. Crofton as if she expected him to be very much impressed with the kindness of Lord and Lady Whitby’s intention to drag him into the honours of a contested election.

“ I have already promised Barton all the interest I possess,” said Crofton, very coolly.

Mrs. Ashby laughed.

“ There is no making you serious,” said she ;
“ Lady Whitby will be so amused at the idea of your supporting those shocking people.”

Crofton smiled.

“It is a very original idea I have no doubt,” said he, “as it strikes you as such; but I am afraid the majority of the —— shire electors have got the same original idea in their heads, and mean to act upon it the first opportunity.”

Mrs. Ashby was a little alarmed lest she should have offended Mr. Crofton, but still more alarmed at the possibility that he should really mean to support the interest of Mr. Barton, when Lady Whitby had always said that not a gentleman in the county would think of so debasing himself. “What can you mean, Mr. Crofton?” said she; “you are not in earnest, I am sure?”

“I am sure,” replied Crofton, “that I never was more in earnest in my life. Nothing on earth can interest me less than who is in or out of Parliament; but as Mr. Barton accommodated me in an arrangement I wished to make, I vo-

lunteered to assist him in any way that would forward his wishes, without giving me trouble!"

"That was very kind of you," said Mrs. Ashby with a friendly smile, "but perhaps it was not a binding sort of promise; dear Lady Whitby will be so distressed to have her proposal refused at once. May I tell her you will think about it?"

"By all means!" replied Crofton, "you can say if you please that I *have* thought about it."

"That's very amiable of you," said Mrs. Ashby, and she rose to receive some guests who had just entered. Perhaps she would have thought him less amiable if she had read the contemptuous curl of his lip, which accompanied his words.

"Crofton!" said Dacre, as they were walking together the following morning, "was not Mrs.

Ashby reading you a letter from Lady Whitby last night?"

"Yes!" replied Crofton; "did you not hear its contents?"

"Not exactly," replied Dacre; "I thought I heard something about Barton and the county; but I could not hear distinctly."

"True," replied Crofton; "I remember Miss Ashby had got possession of your ear, if not of your attention. So you did not hear Lady Whitby's magnificent offer, of allowing me to fight the cause of her county jealousies, with my time, trouble, and purse." He then repeated to Dacre Lady Whitby's message on the subject.

"It is a strange arrogant set, this aristocracy of ours!" continued Crofton. "Now Lord Whitby is just one of those weak men, who is sure to mistake the possession of power for the fitness to use it."

“ I am afraid,” said Dacre, “ there is a strong tendency in human nature to reverse the well-known dictum, and assume that power is knowledge ; but I do not think that such an assumption is peculiar to the English aristocracy.”

“ Faith ! I don’t know,” rejoined Crofton ; “ I have lived enough out of England to view it *en citoyen du monde*, and to learn to despise the hollow pretensions to wisdom and virtue of those who are deemed the first in our land. I know that their wisdom is founded on presumption, their virtue in severity to the unfortunate, and kindness to the prosperous. I have bought my opinions by personal experience.”

“ You are somewhat sweeping, Crofton, in your condemnation,” said Dacre, rather surprised at the unusual energy and seeming bitterness with which he had spoken.

“ Perhaps so,” replied Crofton, “ but it is not

the less just. You will agree with me in time."

"I think not!" said Dacre. "Had I allowed my opinions to be guided by my feelings, there is no evil I might not have attributed to the institutions of a country, from which I have gathered such a harvest of mortification; but I felt the baneful influence of personal feelings, and I hope I have escaped the danger."

"And so," rejoined Crofton, "you have become partial, from the fear of being unjust."

"No man is aware of his own partialities," replied Dacre; "but do not suppose that I have been blind to the insolence of wealth, the abuse of power, the pride of birth, the frivolity of fashion, and the meanness of its votaries. I have seen all this in England, I have seen it in all classes, modified only according to circumstances: and I know that I shall see it in

all countries, for vices and failings like these are inherent in man."

"Upon my life!" said Crofton, relaxing into his more usual tone, "such doctrines are enough to destroy the hopes of the purest philanthropist; but never mind," continued he, in his half humorous, half ironical tone, "it won't affect me, for my young enthusiasm upon every subject died a natural death before I was twenty. It is only the ghost that rises within me sometimes." Dacre smiled. "But," said Crofton, reassuming the serious tone, "how can you uphold a system of society, to the faults of which your eyes are so open?"

"Because," replied Dacre, "I believe the advantages outweigh the faults. I am far from thinking that our social system is perfect. I do not even say that it might not be improved; but I think its advantages are its own, whilst

the majority of its evils, arising in the frailty of our nature, would be found to disfigure any institution that springs from man."

"Undoubtedly one of the advantages it can claim for its own," said Crofton, ironically, "is the production of such men as Lord Whitby; without the law of primogeniture, men like him could not be found."

"There are some," said Dacre, "who may serve rather to show the abuse than the use of hereditary honour. Now I would quote the Duke of Bolton as an instance of the latter; moreover," continued he, "I think we have no more right to say that a system is bad, because it is ill executed, than to condemn a play, because the actors have failed."

"Nor," rejoined Crofton, "to uphold the play, because a great genius has made it popular, in spite of its deficiencies."

“Certainly not,” replied Dacre; “extremes should never be cited as examples; but in Lord Whitby you did not select a fool, and in the Duke of Bolton I have not named a genius; and if, in one, may be seen the ignorance which springs from luxurious idleness, in the other we profit by the cultivation resulting from undisturbed leisure.”

“Then,” said Crofton, “you allow that your actors want teaching, to do justice to their parts: but who will be their schoolmaster?”

“That which is the schoolmaster of England, ‘Public Opinion;’ and the more education is extended, the more will be expected of those who stand highest.”

“The expectation will be disappointed!” said Crofton contemptuously.

“I think not,” said Dacre. “Remember we have not only an aristocracy of birth and of

wealth, but of merit ; and those who enjoy but the knowledge of power must yield to the power of knowledge."

" Not whilst hereditary honours give the right to distinction and ease without labour," observed Crofton.

" Yet, after all," said Dacre, " the institution of an aristocracy is founded upon the principle of division of labour. They are the holders of capital — they are "——

" Stop, stop, my dear fellow," said Crofton, with an air of affected fatigue ; " you are going to give me the first chapter on Political Economy. Who ever thought of profaning the groves of a villa at Rome with such words as ' division of labour,' and ' holder of capital ! ' Dacre !" continued he, again looking serious, " I may not agree with you ; but I admire you. I respect you for your opinions ; for you would

uphold the institutions from which you have suffered. I am not so noble. No! I have been the victim through life of our accursed laws of inheritance, and I abhor them."

Dacre looked surprised. He had never heard Crofton speak so seriously or so bitterly before, and he did not understand to what he alluded.

"When I was young," continued he, and could have enjoyed my life, I was checked in every wish, and blighted in every hope, by poverty. I loved, and was loved in return; but I had a younger brother's pittance, and marriage was regarded as a sin. Had I then married, I might, perhaps, have led a better and a happier life." He paused for a moment. "It is too late in the day to be sentimental now!" said he, in his more accustomed tone; "but poverty never teaches prudence, you know, or, if she does, she must have found me a bad pupil; for I never

could learn that lesson; and so I was what others call extravagant, and what I call unfortunate. Fortune came too late. My brother died; but my rascally creditors had forestalled the pecuniary advantages of that event, and then"—— he hesitated.

"You succeeded to Lord Hexham's property," said Dacre, who saw the delicacy which checked the completion of his sentence.

"Yes," replied Crofton; "thanks to the same unnatural law which deprived me of competency in my youth, I became heir to the property that should not have been mine. Dacre! I wish I had never known you—still more that I had never liked you: it is bad enough to be a robber; but to be the robber of one's friend is still worse." Crofton spoke with apparent agitation.

"Do not think of me," said Dacre; "I feel

your kindness, Crofton ! but the riches of Croesus could not make me happy." Crofton made no reply. They had now returned to the streets, and they walked on together for some little distance in silence. Both seemed absorbed in the thoughts to which this conversation had given rise ; but they were aroused from their reverie by the approach of Mr. Harper. He accosted them, and after making a few commonplace observations on the day, he turned to Crofton, saying,—

" I should be glad to speak a few words with you, Mr. Crofton."

" When ? " asked Crofton, in a tone that showed no great inclination for the conference proposed.

" The sooner the better," replied Harper ;
" now, if you are disengaged."

Crofton made him no answer, but he withdrew

his arm from Dacre's, saying, "Dacre, we shall meet at dinner. *Au revoir !*" Harper's proffered arm was accepted ; they turned together down a narrow street, and left Dacre to wonder what circumstances could have produced between them so much intimacy with so little friendship.

Crofton had sometimes talked of Harper's peculiar manner, and of the amusement to be derived from the study of odd characters ; but still, when they were together, there seemed no cordiality in his manner toward him, and no pleasure in his society. He had heard them once discussing with some interest the news that had arrived of the fate of a race. Possibly they might be confederates on the Turf.

CHAP. V.

Vouloir oublier quelqu'un c'est y penser. L'amour a cela de commun avec les scrupules, qu'il s'aigrit par les réflexions et les retours que l'on fait pour s'en délivrer. Il faut, s'il se peut, ne point songer à sa passion pour l'affoiblir.

LA BRUYERE.

A LONGER time than usual had elapsed since Dacre had heard from Harry Molesworth. He knew that the friendship which had commenced between Lady Emily and Mary, though begun by his means, had not been interrupted by that mysterious cause which had driven him for ever from her presence. Molesworth had written him word that Lady Kendal had proposed that Mary should pass the few days with them at

Oakley Park, in which Harry was obliged to leave her to attend a court-martial. Dacre had hoped, ere this, to have received some account from Harry of his wife's visit. He knew that his friend was not likely to delay writing on a subject so deeply interesting to his feelings; and, though every hope had long withered in his breast, the idea that Molesworth had been withheld by his reluctance to make some painful communication with respect to Lady Emily had taken forcible possession of his mind, and even increased his usual depression. But a note of kind reproaches from Mrs. Ashby for what she termed Dacre's "shameful desertion of late," obliged him again to join one of those parties, from which he derived so little amusement.

That evening dancing was proposed—dancing, as Mrs. Ashby said, "just in a quiet way,"

which meant, that one of the company should be offered up as a sacrifice to the pleasure of others; and that the best-natured lady in the room was to play the fiddler's part, without the fiddler's wages. Dacre shrank from the sight and sound of gaiety, for which his present state of spirits peculiarly unfitted him; and, retiring to the room where cards were, as usual, going on, he proposed to Crofton to play.

“ Mr. Dacre,” said Harper, when the game was over, “you shall give me my revenge to night; you won last, I think.”

Whether Dacre was more than ordinarily pre-occupied, or his adversaries more than ordinarily fortunate or skilful, might be doubtful — but Dacre was the loser; he had lost more to Crofton than he had ever lost before, and he was shocked to find how large a sum he had also lost to Harper. Till then he had never

played so high, and he retired to his room that night dissatisfied with himself for having allowed the pastime suggested by *canni* to so nearly approach the more determined vice of gambling. These thoughts indisposed him to rest: it was not late, and to occupy himself he tried to read; but he found it difficult to fix his attention to the book, and he began a letter to Harry Molesworth.

He had not been long thus engaged, when he was startled by a knock at his door, and Crofton entered. He seated himself, said something of the insufferable heat and bore of Mrs. Ashby's parties, vowed neither angel or devil should tempt him there again, took out his splendid snuff-box, and then paused for a while. Dacre thought him more excited than usual in manner, and the suspicion crossed his mind, that he was a little heated by wine.

“Dacre,” said he, after a few moments' silence;

and again the snuff-box was tapped, and opened, and put down on the table ; — “ Dacre, you will think me a deuced odd fellow for what I am about to say ; but for once in my life I am going to turn Mentor.” Dacre looked surprised. Crofton gave a forced laugh. “ It is amusing, I own, to think of me in that capacity, but, by the immortal gods, it’s true ; and so, to the point,” continued he in a different tone : “ let me ask you one question—is not the love of play in you a newly acquired taste ? ”

“ Newly acquired it certainly is,” replied Dacre, “ but I will hardly call it yet a taste.”

“ Then beware,” said he, with greater earnestness — “ beware that it does not become so. I do not wish to force myself into your confidence, but from what I have heard, and from an expression used by yourself the other day,

I fear you have had too much cause for unhappiness."

"You are right in your conjecture," said Dacre.

"Then," rejoined Crofton, "take warning : take warning from one"—he hesitated a moment — "from one who has lived longer, and seen more of life than you have yet done. You seek forgetfulness, but you will only add to your memory fresh cause of regret."

"I believe you are right," said Dacre. "No man can purchase peace at the expense of his conscience."

"Perhaps not," said Crofton, "but that was not all I meant; you should remember that in the attempt to solace yourself for the vexations of delay, you may lose for ever the object in view." Dacre did not understand his meaning. "Is it not very possible," continued Crofton,

“that she who is now withheld from you by others may become willing to relinquish you herself?”

“Crofton, you are under some mistake,” replied Dacre, “in supposing that any change is ever likely to be effected in my condition. Lady Emily Somers has been the arbitress of her own fate.”

Crofton seemed surprised. “I thought it had been otherwise,” said he.

“I did not know,” rejoined Dacre, “that the report of our probable marriage had ever reached your ear. Tell me what you have heard upon the subject, and I will tell you in return, how far you have been rightly informed. I cannot wish that you, who have just shown so much interest in my behalf, should be ignorant of the facts that have probably determined the fate of my life.”

Crofton then told him all he had heard ; and when Dacre had listened to this somewhat garbled version of the matter, which rumour had sent forth, he confided to Crofton the real state of the case.

There was nothing in Crofton's manner of receiving his confidence, to remind him of that heartless indifference, which had hitherto indisposed him to allude to the subject, which was for ever present to his mind : on the contrary, he appeared to enter seriously and considerably into his feelings ; and Dacre found that in the quickness he displayed in at once comprehending his meaning, he was spared the task of becoming explicit on a topic, on which, to have dwelt with minuteness, would have been peculiarly painful. It was long since he had spoken of Emily ; and perhaps the relief of giving vent to his pent up feelings was greater than he

was aware, and gave additional value to the manner in which Crofton received his confidence; and perhaps he felt, also, that he had hitherto done him injustice. The result was such as might have been expected: a revolution in favour of Crofton was worked in his mind by this interview. He knew that Crofton had faults; he knew that the world had taught him to speak lightly of the virtues and feelings it had weakened or destroyed. "But, after all," said he to himself, as Crofton closed the door—"after all, he is a noble-minded fellow: he has a heart; he can feel for others; his coldness is only towards himself."

From this time the intercourse between Dacre and Crofton became considerably more frequent; and Dacre began to wonder that he should ever have been so averse to the acquaintance of one, in whose society he now felt his

pleasure was daily increasing. Dacre did not play again. Indeed, though far from insensible to the friendship which Crofton had testified by his interference on that subject, the rectitude of his own mind would have checked the continuance of a pursuit which he could not, and did not, approve. But though he ceased to play, and though he ceased to meet Mr. Harper so often as before at Crofton's house, yet whenever they did meet, Harper seemed anxious to become better acquainted with him. The letter to Harry Molesworth, which Crofton's visit had interrupted, was postponed; for upon second thoughts he determined again to await the arrival of letters from England, before he wrote to enquire the cause of his silence.

The arrival of letters from home is always a moment of excitement to those who are travelling abroad. It recalls us at once to all we have

left — to the cares we would forget, the sorrows we would efface, the joys that are passed. The messenger is expected with feverish impatience, and yet we tremble to read the tidings he brings. The letters are placed in our hands; and quicker than thought the directions are looked at, the hand-writings are recognised, and we glance at the seals to descry if any have come on a message of death.

Some are sure to tell of change; and the change will startle, when its progress is unseen. Perhaps we read that friends will join us in our pilgrimage abroad, their fortunes broken, or their health impaired. We hear the men we left in power have ceased to rule. The splendid mansion where we danced and feasted is now the prey of creditors who once decked it so richly for pleasure. The house that wept a father's death now lights its halls in honour of the heir.

The giddy flirt has pledged her troth — the reckless youth has learnt a husband's fondness, and a father's care — the widow wears again the bridal robe — the laughing girl we saw so full of life now droops beneath the blight of pale consumption — the child who frolicked at our parting is cold and stiff within its early grave. The afflictions we grieved for have ceased to afflict, and the joy we rejoiced at is turned into sorrow. Yes! we read of such changes in those with whose image we have long been familiar: we marked them not when we were near, but, when removed to a distance, they show us the progress of life.

How sadly this progress is watched by the mind which is dead to all changes, and stands still in its grief! How dispiriting to see the healing powers of time in others close the wounds of sharp affliction, and yet to feel it has

not plucked from out the heart the deep canker of disappointment ! Dacre had made no progress towards emancipation from the thralldom of his feelings. He for ever bore about him the consciousness of a well-grounded attachment, of undiminished love, and blighted hopes.

The post-day was come, and Dacre looked with impatience for the long expected letter from his friend. Other letters were placed in his hand, but from Harry Molesworth there was none. He pondered over the contents of those he had received, and then, sauntering out, he gave himself up to gloomy speculations on the cause of his silence. He had not, however, proceeded far, when he was accosted by his servant. The man had been to the post-office on some errand of his own ; and Dacre having asked him if he was sure there had been no other letter for him, he took the opportunity of being there, to

make the same enquiry at the office. A letter had been overlooked — the letter, which of all others Dacre most cared to receive; and his eye glanced hastily over the paper, to see if his fears were about to be realised.

Mary had been ill,—ill at Oakley Park; Harry had been sent for there. He had himself been staying with Lady Kendal and Emily, and he could now fulfil his parting promise, to tell Dacre of her spirits, her mind, her health, her employments. Her spirits were even, though she never was gay: her colour had fled, and the languor of sickness had crept over her frame, and tinged her expression of countenance; yet her beauty was uninjured, and her health was improving. Her time was occupied in devoted attentions to her mother—in promoting the instruction and amusement of her brother, then at home for the holydays,—in reading; and

in works of charity. Harry named the books in which he had heard from Mary that she had found most pleasure, and also certain plans and regulations for the benefit of the poor, in which she had occupied herself with great zeal. Dacre knew that the books were those which he had recommended her to read; and the charities alluded to, were those, of which he had given her the plans in writing, on the night of their parting at Hatton.

Lady Emily had talked of her father to Mary — of all she had suffered at the time of his death; but of Dacre no mention had been made. She had seemed to shrink from any possible allusion to that subject: she had even said to Mary, “There are sorrows which wean us from life, and point to the grave; but of those we should never speak, for we must struggle not to follow too quickly, where they would lead.”

Dacre was greatly affected at these proofs of unaltered attachment on her part : “ She loves me still ! ” said he to himself, and his heart glowed with the thought. “ This spell shall then be broken ! why is the power we bear over each other to endure but for our misery ? The gift of pure happiness seems in our hands ; why are we thus to refuse its enjoyment ? ” and he quickened his step, and it seemed as if his mind was made up to some determined resolve.

The excitement of the subject on which his thoughts now dwelt had carried him further in his walk than he was aware, till his attention was arrested by the beauty of the surrounding scenery. He had mounted on a height which commanded a view of the town and *campagna* ; and, seating himself on the rising bank, he gazed upon the scene before him. It was sunset, and Dacre thought upon the ride, when he had dis-

cussed with Emily those subjects to which Harry had alluded in his letter. Then, too, the day had been drawing to a close; that same eternal sun had been setting, when she had said to him, "There will be no sunshine to-morrow." That sunset had told how homely joys and peaceful pleasures pass away; but now the heavens glowed and blazed in one vast sheet of golden conflagration, and it told of kingdoms lost and empires past away. Dacre looked upon the city from which its brightness had fled, and he saw in the pile that rose dark and distinct to his view, the records of ages gone by.

There is sadness in the sight of cities that outlive their fame. They seem not as the dwellings of the present, but as the sepulchres of ancient days, where lie entombed the annals of the past. On the mountain we forget the existence of man, but here we remember how oft he has

died. In the solitude of nature, the power of time seems to lessen, whilst here he lays waste all before him. Yet both alike will point beyond this earth: in one we see the type of life eternal; and from the gloom which desolation and decay create springs the strong and ardent hope of immortality. These are the thoughts which crush the soul's rebellion to the woes of life, and raise from the ashes of despair a hope of happiness in store.

CHAP. VI.

Ev'ry man in this age has not a soul
Of crystal for all men to read their actions
Through ; men's hearts and faces are so far asunder,
That they hold no intelligence.

BRAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

DACRE now bent his homeward steps, more composed and resigned to his lot than when he ascended that hill. He thought on all the struggles of the pure and gentle being, whose joyous youth was wrecked upon the hidden shoal, where his was also lost ; and the flush of shame passed over him, to think that the meekness of woman can support, where the spirit of man is bowed down. Dacre walked musingly on, and, engrossed with the subject of his own reflections, he was startled at hearing his name

pronounced, as he regained the precincts of the town ; he looked round, and saw that Harper was just behind him. Dacre stopped : they were both returning home in the same direction, and Harper proposed they should walk back together. Dacre could not refuse, though but little inclined to conversation.

“ Have you seen Crofton to-day ? ” said Dacre, by way of a topic. Harper said he had not seen Mr. Crofton for some days.

“ You have long been acquainted with him, I believe ? ” said Dacre, who was not without curiosity on the subject of their seeming intimacy.

“ Longer, I believe, Mr. Dacre, than you have,” replied Harper, with some emphasis.

“ If acquaintance was measured by time, mine with Crofton would be still rather slight,” observed Dacre ; “ but circumstances seem to have favoured our intimacy.”

“Circumstances always favour Mr. Crofton,” said Harper dryly.

“Indeed !” rejoined Dacre ; “he is not inclined to think himself fortunate.”

“Then he don’t deserve his good fortune,” said Harper.

“But,” replied Dacre good-humouredly, “I am not so vain as to expect that Crofton should regard his friendship with me as any piece of good fortune.”

Harper was silent.

“Crofton is remarkably agreeable,” said Dacre, who was inclined to continue the subject.

“So I have heard from better judges in those matters than me,” said Harper ; “we always have business to talk upon, and Mr. Crofton is not one who wastes his words on those who he thinks can do without them.”

Dacre thought he was piqued by some slight on Crofton's part, and said no more : the conversation took another turn, and Harper asked if he had left England soon after Captain Molesworth's marriage. Dacre mentioned the month in which he had quitted England, and then enquired if he was acquainted with Captain Molesworth.

" I have seen him," replied Harper, " and I believe I know him by sight, though I mistook you for him."

" Indeed ! " exclaimed Dacre ; " then I think you cannot remember him, for never were two people more unlike each other."

" Very true," said Harper, " but the mistake was not mine."

" How so ? " rejoined Dacre.

" Why for that matter," replied Harper, " your friend Mr. Crofton can tell you better

than I: it was he who told me you were Captain Molesworth."

"You must have misunderstood him," said Dacre.

"No, no!" replied Harper, shaking his head; "trust me for making a mistake, when I want to know a thing. This is not the first time we have met, Mr. Dacre: the first time I saw you was at the play."

Dacre looked at him. "Were you there with Crofton?" said he.

Harper said "Yes!" and named the theatre, and the time at which they had met.

Dacre recognised in Harper the man who had so often turned his eyes towards him when at the play with Harry Molesworth.

Harper continued. "Well, Mr. Dacre! I thought I caught your name, and I looked at you, and I fancied it was you, and I had a fancy

to know if it was, and I asked Mr. Crofton your name: he told me you were Captain Molesworth, and when I asked the name of your companion, he said he did not know."

"Perhaps he mistook the direction in which you pointed," said Dacre; who, however, remembered perfectly having overheard the very answers which Harper now repeated."

"I know there was no mistake in the matter," said Harper.

"It is impossible," replied Dacre, "that Crofton could have intentionally misled you upon so unimportant a subject."

"Mr. Crofton has his own reasons, no doubt!" said he, with a coarse, contemptuous smile.

Dacre made no reply. He saw that Harper was from some cause irritated against Crofton; he felt no wish to prolong the topic, and their walk soon came to a close. It certainly seemed

strange to Dacre that Crofton should have endeavoured to deceive Harper as to who he was ; and for a while he debated with himself on the possible causes of this petty deceit : but it seemed ungenerous to indulge in surmises on the motives of one who had treated him with such openness and candour, and he dismissed the subject from his mind, till he could ask of Crofton an explanation of this trifling mystery. An opportunity soon offered ; and as they sat together one evening, Dacre told Crofton that he had discovered where it was he had seen Harper before.

“ His face always perplexed me,” said Dacre, “ till he reminded me the other day that he was at the play with you on the night we met there.”

Crofton gave one of his forced, affected smiles,

as he said, "Has the vulgar fellow been boasting of having gone to the play with me?"

"There was no boasting in the matter," replied Dacre, rather gravely. "He only recalled to my mind what at the time had made some impression on me."

Crofton said nothing; leant back in his chair, had recourse to his snuff-box, and then offered it to Dacre.

"Why Harper should have been interested in knowing who I was, I don't know," said Dacre; "but I remember he constantly fixed his eyes upon me that evening."

"I dare say he did," interrupted Crofton; "for he is deuced ill-bred sometimes."

"And I believe," continued Dacre, "that he asked you my name."

"Very likely," replied Crofton, "for he is curiosity itself; and what if he did?"

“ Can you remember what answer you made him,” enquired Dacre.

“ It might not be safe to trust my memory on such a subject,” said Crofton, in a tone of *persiflage*; “ but if you are collecting curious questions and answers, I dare say I can make an extract from my journal for you.”

Dacre smiled. “ To say the truth,” rejoined he, “ I believe, though the question was simple, your answer was curious. Crofton,” continued he, seriously, “ I wish you would tell me why you misled Harper as to my name.”

“ Did he tell you that I had misled him ?” asked Crofton, hastily.

“ Yes,” replied Dacre; “ and I know that you did so; for I overheard Harper’s question and your answer: I heard you tell him that I was Captain Molesworth; and when he pointed out Molesworth, you said you did not know him.

I thought it strange at the time ; but thinking I might have been mistaken, I dismissed it from my mind ; but Harper has recalled it by repeating to me what had passed."

Crofton did not answer immediately. " His impertinence knows no bounds," muttered he ; and for a moment there was a change in his countenance.

" Crofton," said Dacre, " your seeming intimacy with Harper has, I own, excited my surprise ; and though I have no right to ask of you what you may not wish to tell me, yet as my own name is now in question, I am certainly anxious to know why you should have made me pass for another to him."

" To save you from his acquaintance," said Crofton, with some agitation. " Dacre, since you press me on the subject, I will confess to you that I did not wish you should become

acquainted with Harper; and I knew that he would have desired to be introduced to you, had I told him your name."

"What interest could he have felt in me?" enquired Dacre.

"The interest that a gambler will feel in those who are young and rich."

"What should have led him to suppose that I had money?"

"A shilling at Doctors' Commons could give the rascal that information," said Crofton; "and he has time and wits to discover the fortune and estate of every idle man in town."

"Your motive was one of kindness to me; and yet," continued Dacre, looking earnestly at him, "you have lived in seeming intimacy with this man, from whose acquaintance you wished to save me."

"Yes," replied Crofton, "in *seeming* intimacy; and even that is disagreeable to me."

"Surely," observed Dacre, "you can have no difficulty in throwing off one whose society is displeasing to you."

"There are follies in life which bring their own punishment," said Crofton; "and my acquaintance with this man was the result of circumstances I did not wish should come to your knowledge."

"Why should you have feared?" said Dacre.

"I thought you would probably be prejudiced against me: report had made me like you, and I did not wish to appear as the companion of an adventurer or a gambler. You could not know that it was my misfortune, not my fault, that brought me into contact with such a man; and,"

continued he, with a sarcastic smile, "my virtue shall now rid me of him."

Dacre begged he would explain.

"It was play that brought us together; but I have abjured the tedious pastime of losing my own money to win other people's, and the riddance of that vulgar, swaggering fellow shall be virtue's own reward."

"His manners are certainly coarse and disagreeable," replied Dacre: "but he cannot help that; and as you have been long acquainted with him, it would be hurting his feelings unnecessarily if you were to avoid him very pointedly."

"His deserts will be equal to his merits," said Crofton, bitterly; "a man like him is not often pained by his own sensitiveness."

"I suspect, however," rejoined Dacre, "that Harper is not so devoid of that feeling as you suppose; and I cannot help thinking that some

change of manner on your part has wounded him."

"Spare your pity," said Crofton; "Harper wo'n't die of his sensibility."

"Perhaps not," rejoined Dacre; "but if you only object to his presence now, on the score of the want of refinement which he never has had, it will seem capricious to repulse him without any fresh ground of complaint."

"He knows better than to call me capricious," said Crofton.

"I think he is piqued by your avoidance of him," observed Dacre.

"Did the impudent scoundrel presume to abuse me to you?" asked Crofton, in rather an angry tone.

"No," replied Dacre, "he did not abuse you; and if he had, do not suppose that I should be so treacherous as to repeat to you

any conversation that was not meant for your ear."

A pause ensued.

"Dacre," said Crofton, "there is no use in concealing the truth from you. If I do not tell you the truth, this Harper may impose some lie upon you, as to the cause of my conduct towards him. *You* are the cause of my peculiar hatred to this man."

"How so?" exclaimed Dacre, eagerly.

"Before I say another word, I must exact from you some pledge, that to him you will take no notice of what I am about to tell you."

"I will pledge you my word of honour, that whatever you tell me in confidence shall be regarded as such by me," replied Dacre.

"You remember," said Crofton, "that you lost at Mrs. Ashby's a larger sum of money than you ever staked before. I watched the progress

of that game. Harper won it." He paused. "A man of honour could not have won it," said he, and his look and emphasis explained the meaning he would convey.

Dacre's confidence in Crofton was confirmed, and he shrunk from all further intercourse with Harper.

CHAP. VII.

Hence disappointment lurks in every page,
As bees in flowers.

YOUNG.

TIME wore on; and Mrs. Ashby was beginning to grow uneasy at the little progress that had been made in the flirtation she had wished to establish between Dacre and her eldest daughter. She most unjustly reproached herself with a want of activity in behalf of her children. She was sure that Lady Margaret Sheffield had done her duty as a mother so much better than herself. She had married off three, out of her five ugly girls — girls that nobody would have taken to, if their mother had not put it into the heads of those men to marry them. To be sure,

it would go against one at first to do the things that Lady Margaret did : but then it really was a duty in a mother to exert herself, and Lady Margaret was right ; and Mrs. Ashby determined to be more active — and Dacre was pressed into the service of an expedition to Tivoli.

The day was fixed ; and it was arranged that the whole party should sleep there at the inn for one night, and return on the morrow. The day arrived — the weather seemed propitious — the Miss Ashbys were decked out in their newest bonnets, and their prettiest gowns : a *demi toilette* was safely packed for them to wear, and look well in the evening ; and the two smart men with whom Cecilia had coquetted herself into a flirtation arrived to accompany them. Miss Ashby was in her very best looks ; and as Dacre handed her down to the carriage, Mrs. Ashby gave a smile of maternal content,

for she felt sure he must admire her, and that all would go well. With the help of the dickey the carriage could well hold six ; and some said what an agreeable day they should have ; and all but Dacre, perhaps, really thought it would be a party of pleasure.

The walls of Rome were past ; and now they looked upon the low and broken aqueducts that stretched their ruined arches far across the plain.

Miss Ashby raised her glass to her eye, and said to Dacre, in a sentimental tone, " What splendid corridors these may once have been ! " The two young men declared that nobody knew the fun of Rome who had not been snipe-shooting. One declared he had never had a better day's sport since he left Cambridge ; and the other vowed he had half a mind to run up a shooting box down in the marshes ; and

Cecilia laughed at the notion, and promised they would all go and see him in his new house. Mrs. Ashby looked at Dacre, just to see if he thought Cecilia foolish. She saw that Dacre was listening to her eldest daughter, and then she smiled at her ease with Cecilia and her hero, and was sure that all was going on well.

In time, one of the sportsmen, however, became more and more silent. He turned very pale, and complained of the cold, when others were fearing the heat of the sun. Miss Cecilia treated his complaint as a joke; threw him her shawl, and said it was so droll of him to be chilly — and on they drove. The smell of sulphur, that rises from the stream they were approaching, grew stronger and stronger. Miss Ashby took her highly-scented handkerchief from her best embroidered bag, looked at Dacre, and said, “How unpleasant!” Cecilia laughed,

and said she "quite liked the smell, it was a dear smell—it seemed so nice and ancient;" and Mrs. Ashby felt how charmingly her daughters' tastes contrasted with each other.

Meanwhile the sickness of approaching fever seemed fast increasing on the gentleman who had complained of cold: the blood looked stagnant on his cheek, his eye was dim and heavy, his lips were black, and there was the drawn expression on his face which tells of coming illness.

"Fitzgerald, I am sure you are ill," said Dacre, who caught sight of his countenance.

"I believe I am," he replied; and his teeth chattered as he spoke.

"Oh dear, how sorry I am!" said Mrs. Ashby, with a compassionate smile. "Perhaps the sulphureous smell affects you; you will be better when we have passed the stream."

“ It is enough to make any one ill,” observed Julia, in a languid voice.

Poor Fitzgerald knew the smell had nothing to do with his ailments, but had not the energy to contradict their view of his case. Cecilia looked concerned, for she was rather a good-natured girl, and Fitzgerald was her favourite admirer of the moment.

“ How long have you been ill ? ” enquired she.

He owned he had felt unwell the day before, and had got up with a headache : but he trusted a party of pleasure would cure the headache ; and a cordial draught had made him warm, so he had thought himself quite well when he set out.

“ You will be obliged to go to bed as soon as we get to Tivoli,” said Miss Ashby, with great philosophy, for Fitzgerald did not interest her.

“ You must let me nurse you, and doctor you there, as I am the old woman of the party,” said Mrs. Ashby, with a look of maternal benignity.

“ Thank you,” said Fitzgerald : “ I dare say I shall be quite well to-morrow ;” and he shivered violently as he spoke.

“ Had we not better stop a moment ?” said Dacre, who thought the motion of the carriage might increase the shivering fit.

“ By all means,” replied Mrs. Ashby. Dacre felt his pulse : his impression was confirmed that the poor young man was seriously ill. He took off his own cloak, and threw it over him, though Miss Ashby reproached him, *sotto voce*, for such imprudence, while Cecilia and Mrs. Ashby hunted in their reticules for salts, and *eau de Cologne* to cure the ague.

" I am so afraid you wo'n't be comfortable at Tivoli," said Cecilia: " I wish we had not come to-day."

Mrs. and Miss Ashby said nothing ; but Dacre took advantage of this opening to propose they should return. Fitzgerald was shocked at the idea of returning on his account, and begged they would go on. Dacre looked at Cecilia to second his proposal, and she declared she had no wish to go to Tivoli. Mrs. Ashby was dreadfully perplexed: she was very sorry for Mr. Fitzgerald, and for Cecilia ; but then it seemed so hard upon Julia to give up the party when Dacre was with them, and things seemed prosperous, or at any rate might become so at Tivoli.

" By Jove, Fitzgerald, you are in for it," said the sporting friend, turning his head from

the box in front into the carriage: "I suppose it will be my turn next: what odds will you take that I have caught it?"

Mrs. Ashby turned pale: "I think, Mr. Dacre, if none of the party would very much object, that we had better turn about, and get back to Rome as soon as possible; I am sure it will be better for Mr. Fitzgerald, and we shall none of us enjoy the trip when he is suffering." Cecilia and Dacre joyfully acquiesced — Miss Ashby looked resigned, and said in a voice that was meant for Dacre's ear alone, — "I believe you are right."

"Julia, keep your handkerchief to your mouth," whispered Mrs. Ashby in her daughter's ear: "he has got the malaria, and it is dreadfully infectious;" and then watched her opportunity to impart the same advice and information to Cecilia.

"I don't believe, mamma, it is infectious," whispered Cecilia, who did not like to be deprived of talking to Mr. Fitzgerald, as much as she could, all the way home.

"My dear," rejoined Mrs. Ashby, "I am quite of Lady Whitby's opinion, that every complaint is infectious, though some people don't happen to catch it. We shall consider our party for dinner holds good; so neither you nor Mr. Dacre must desert us," said Mrs. Ashby, addressing herself to the gentlemen outside. They both declared their willingness to accept the invitation; "and," continued Mrs. Ashby, looking at Dacre, "supposing, as we cannot have the pleasure of Mr. Fitzgerald's company, you ask Mr. Crofton to come and join us, if he will excuse our want of preparation — you know how happy we always are to see him." Dacre

promised to be the bearer of her message. "He is a great friend of yours, I think," said Mrs. Ashby. Dacre said he was. "He is so intellectual!" observed Mrs. Ashby, with a very sensible face.

"It is quite refreshing to hear him on the fine arts," said Miss Ashby, who had lately discovered the necessity, at Rome, of being a little pedantic.

"You and Mr. Crofton have made quite an alliance on that subject lately," remarked Mrs. Ashby, with an approving look at her daughter. "By the by, he wants Julia to sit to —— for her bust. Do you think he would succeed? We think of his beginning next week. I know, Mr. Dacre, that you are a great connoisseur, so you must come and criticise for us."

The carriage now stopped: Fitzgerald was deposited at his lodgings: Dacre and the other

gentleman assisted him to his room: the physician was sent for, and the malady pronounced to be an aggravated case of ague, contracted in the marshes. Nothing more could be done for the patient; and Dacre walked to Crofton's house to deliver Mrs. Ashby's invitation to dinner.

CHAP. VIII.

O you gods ! think I, what need we have any friends, if we should never have need of them ? they were the most needless creatures living, should we never have use of them ; and would most resemble sweet instruments hung up in cases, that keep their sounds to themselves.

Timon of Athens.

DACRE mounted the stairs that led to Crofton's apartment : the servant who usually waited in the anteroom was not there. Dacre heard voices within, and without further ceremony entered. Crofton was standing with his arm leaning on the chimney-piece, and his back to the door. Near the table sat a man, with his legs resting on the seat of a neighbouring chair, and with an air of perfect ease, not to say

vulgarity. Crofton turned his head on hearing the door open; and his countenance bore the air of extreme displeasure at this unexpected intrusion. "Dacre! is it you?" he exclaimed; and his expression relaxed into one of surprise. The visitor turned his head, and Dacre saw that it was Harper.

"I thought you were gone to Tivoli," said Crofton: Dacre explained the cause of his return, and delivered Mrs. Ashby's message.

Crofton smiled ironically. "Sake's sake!" said he, in an under tone to Dacre: "shall you be there?" Dacre said he should. "Then I will go. Shall I send a note to say 'yes?'"

Dacre thought he had better do so. Crofton wrote the note; and whilst he was thus occupied, a little common-place conversation took place between Dacre and Harper. Dacre waited in hopes that he would go; but he showed no

inclination to move: conversation flagged; and it was evident that Harper was determined to outstay him.

Crofton came to dinner. He was particularly agreeable; and Mrs. Ashby thought that nobody was so agreeable, with so little effort, as Mr. Crofton: but Dacre saw and knew that he was not, and could not be at ease. This apparent intimacy with the man whom he had branded as a cheat, and with whom he had told Dacre he was determined to avoid all further intercourse, was not accounted for: he stood before Dacre in the position of one convicted of hypocrisy; and yet he sought no opportunity to explain away the circumstance. Dacre hoped and expected that he would have drawn him aside in the course of the evening to say something on the subject; but Crofton showed no desire to seek, or even to avail himself of

any opportunity to do so, and Dacre retired perplexed and distressed at the inconsistency, not to say insincerity, of his friend.

Dacre had scarcely finished his breakfast the following morning, when Crofton entered.

"Dacre," said he, "I do not ask you what impression your visit of yesterday has made upon your mind: I know full well in what light I must appear to you."

"I feel sure," replied Dacre, firmly, "that it must be in your power to remove the impression that appearances were calculated to give."

"It certainly is in my power to account for, if not wholly to justify, my apparent inconsistency," rejoined Crofton: he paused; "and yet," continued he, "it is almost as painful to explain, as to leave the matter in its present obscurity." But Dacre felt that this explanation was not only due to himself but also due to

Crofton's character, and he urged him to proceed. "It probably occurred to you," said Crofton, "that yesterday was selected for an interview with Harper, on account of your intended absence." Dacre said nothing. "And you were right in that idea," continued he: "it was selected by me on that account."

"I had no right to control your actions," observed Dacre.

"That matters not," said Crofton: "I had given you the right to be surprised, at finding me in seeming intimacy with the man whose company I had foresworn to you; and I saw you were surprised—and I felt myself lowered—and if I tell you the object of our interview, you will be surprised, and I shall not be raised; yet," continued he musingly, "now I may seem despicable, but when you understand me, you will feel for me."

“ Then for Heaven’s sake explain yourself,” said Dacre with warmth.

“ I told you once,” replied Crofton, “ that wealth had come to me too late :” he hesitated. “ Dacre, it is in vain that the riches of others have been heaped upon me, for I can never be rich : I live luxuriously, and yet I am worse than poor ; my affairs are involved, and I am actually in distress for want of money.”

“ Why did you not tell me this before ?” said Dacre eagerly. “ Crofton, this is not treating me like a friend — you know I have the power — did you doubt my will to serve you ?”

“ Stop, stop,” said Crofton, in his more usual tone ; “ it is true that the pains and penalties of having once been young and inexperienced fall heavy on my shoulders, but I have not turned highwayman as yet. I grant I have

already received the stolen goods the law awards, but I am not going to rob you now of what the law has spared."

"Do not talk of robbing me," said Dacre: "tell me only in what way I can serve you — what sum you require; but have no dealings with this Harper, on whose honour you say you cannot depend."

"Would to Heaven I had never had dealings with that rascal!" muttered Crofton, and a look of hatred passed over his countenance as he said so. "But," continued he, "he is rich — he can assist me — and I am on the brink of ruin. This was the cause of his visit to me."

"And do you still persist in being assisted by him?" asked Dacre.

"Yes," said Crofton; "on that, if possible, I am resolved. I am in treaty with him for a loan. This evening I shall know the rate of

interest he expects ; and then," added Crofton, with a bitter smile, but careless tone, " if I am satisfied, we shall sign and seal ; and double the rate of interest even he dares ask would I pay, to be rid of the sight of that vulgar fellow."

Dacre begged he would let him know the result of his treaty with Harper, and again proffered his services, should Crofton be inclined to break off all further negotiations with him. They parted late in the evening.

Crofton again returned. " The spirit of Israel dwells in that man," said Crofton, as he seated himself in Dacre's room. " Faith ! since the days of Shylock a more exacting Jew than Harper has not been born to try our patience, and to drain our purses."

" Then," said Dacre, " break off with him at once, and let me be your banker."

" No, my dear friend ; that I am determined

you shall not be. You may serve me, but not by lending money."

"How then?" exclaimed Dacre.

Crofton took snuff, stretched out his legs, crossed his feet, and proceeded, in his usual manner, to state the case.

"You must know that I must have the money required without delay. I have offered to mortgage a part of the Hexham estate as security. 'But then,' quoth the Jew, 'how do I know that it is not already mortgaged? and I expect a high rate of interest with a doubtful security.' This embarrasses me a good deal. If I was in England, I might satisfy his mind on the subject: but here I can only offer the word of a gentleman that he is the first mortgagee; and how the deuce should he know what the word of a gentleman means?"

“What does he propose, then?” asked Dacre.

“At first he proposed that I should pay him a most usurious interest; but now he will be satisfied if I can improve the security by backing the mortgage with two sureties. One of the sureties he can furnish in a man to whom he owes a large sum of money. I must furnish the other. Will you lend me your name?”

“Crofton, I have already told you my willingness to serve you, to the utmost of my power.”

“Nor do I doubt your sincerity,” replied Crofton: “but the sum is large; and if I did not know that I am asking of you only the form and not the substance of assistance, I would not accept your offer.”

“What is the sum?” enquired Dacre.

Crofton told him. It exceeded Dacre's expectations. He saw that if ever called upon to fulfil his promise he should be materially impoverished. But what was wealth to him? Emily would never now share his fortune — it gave him not the happiness he had lost — he never meant to marry — he had offered to assist Crofton — he would not shrink from the promise he had volunteered.

“I shall return to England next spring,” said Crofton, as he withdrew from his pocket the bond, already prepared for his signature; “and then I mean to release your name from this formidable promise to stand sponsor to the land. I can then prove that it is free, and the sureties will be no longer required by our cunning usurer.”

Dacre signed the deed. Crofton talked on other matters, as if the business had been of

slight importance, and then returned to his house, where Harper awaited his return. Crofton showed him Dacre's name in Dacre's handwriting.

"*Now* are you satisfied?" said he with a look and tone of bitterness and contempt. Harper read over the bond.

"Yes!" replied he, with a smile that showed the insolence of triumph: "this will do very well."

"Then begone!" said Crofton, in a commanding tone; "and would to Heaven I might never see your face again!"

Harper grinned. "Good night, Mr. Crofton. I told you," said he significantly, "you would be able to manage the signature with a little trouble. I wish you good night, sir."

Crofton's eyes flashed with anger, and he moved towards him: Harper instantly quitted

the room, ran down stairs, and was out of the house in a minute. Crofton paced up and down the room, his arms folded, and in seeming agitation. It might have been sorrow, it might have been anger, that moved him — but it did not last. His brow relaxed — a smile of irony for a moment curled his lip ; and then he smiled as if some passing thought amused him : then taking up the last French novel on the table, he glanced over its contents, threw himself on the sofa, and his face resumed the placid coldness of the hardened man of pleasure.

CHAP. IX.

Changed is that lovely countenance which shed
Light when she spoke ; and kindled sweet surprise,
As o'er her frame each warm emotion spread,
Play'd round her lips, and sparkled in her eyes.

ROGERS.

NOTHING could be more correct than the account of all that concerned Emily, with which Molesworth had furnished Dacre: she had struggled with her grief, and the struggle had not been wholly in vain.

There is always such a disposition to believe in the superhuman, that we listen with complacency to the exaggerations of fictitious characters; and we are apt to expect, in our heroes and heroines, an eternity of feeling and

purpose that is wholly at variance with truth. A bad man must be for ever dead to the sympathies of nature: he must be the atrocious villain from helpless infancy to his violent end. The good man's fame must be fairer than snow — one single failing would sully its brightness: or, lest such consistency should seem inconsistent, we now look for probability in the uniform benevolence of the cold-blooded murderer — the purity and generosity of the brigand and the corsair — the never-ending revenge of the humble Christian — the disinterested views of the gambler, and the learning of the fribble. With all alike it is love guides the woman, and honour rules the man. Their grief must never die, and their revenge must never fade. To presume to be happy, or to forgive a foe, is the death-blow to all claims on our interest. There is no need of physicians for the

heroes and heroines that dwell in the land of fancy ; for they are ever blest with constitutions that would mock their skill. Night after night can they, with impunity, toss in sleepless agony on their feverish couches ; and neither strength nor beauty is impaired. Neither fainting, fear, or fatigue, can affect the energies of the most delicate woman : should she weep for days and nights together, no reddened eyes, inflated cheeks, and swollen lips, would dare to mar the beauty of her face. No ! the indelible tears of sorrow would have lent fresh grace to her pensive brow, and finely chiselled features. But in these fanciful details of impossible beings there is a tendency to lower the value of those which are real. It engenders a disposition to look for moral anomalies — to doubt the existence of feelings not displayed in the demonstrations of passion — and to rely on those powers

and charms which do not exist, to awaken for others our admiration or sympathy.

Emily Somers had thought herself called upon to sacrifice the first wish of her heart. The sacrifice had been made at the risk of her life, and at the cost of her peace: but it was made; and delicacy forbade that she should display to others the fond regrets and secret sorrows of her soul.

For a time the world supposed that an engagement subsisted between herself and Dacre; and that its declaration was only deferred till the first period of mourning was past. But Dacre remained abroad. Nothing more was heard on the subject, and the engagement was denied by the friends and relations of the family. Then arose various and contradictory rumours on the causes of this supposed break-

ing off. Some said Lady Emily had refused him ; and she was blamed for having given false encouragement. Others said that Lady Kendal had refused her consent — or gave a dramatic sketch of poor Lord Kendal's death-bed scene, wherein he was represented as threatening curses on his daughter's head should she ever unite herself with Dacre ; and when these reports died for want of evidence to support them, people held up their hands, and said, " How shamefully Mr. Dacre had behaved to poor Lady Emily Somers ; that he had won her affections — broken her heart — and was now travelling about, as gay and as happy as possible, flirting with every one abroad ; and would, very likely, end in marrying that foolish, affected Miss Ashby : " and those who did not credit this last version of the case declared the whole

story to be without foundation, and that neither Lady Emily or Mr. Dacre had ever cared for each other.

Nearly a year had elapsed since the death of Lord Kendal. The Duchess of Bolton had made repeated attempts to persuade Emily to come over to Denham. Once she had come for a very short visit when no one was there ; but she had always pleaded, in excuse of her refusal, her want of spirits, and the impossibility of leaving Lady Kendal alone. Since her father's death she had scarcely seen any but her nearest relations, excepting the Molesworths. The duchess dreaded for Emily the effects of so much grief, such anxious watching, and such complete seclusion, and she again proposed that she should pass a few days with them at Denham, meeting only a few old friends, and some quiet yet pleasing country neighbours. Emily

was inclined to refuse. The Molesworths were at Oakley Park, and she thought to make that serve as a reason for remaining at home; but her mother was anxious she should go.

Mary's illness had greatly prolonged her first visit at Oakley, and Lady Kendal had had time to become intimate with her. Her good sense, and the quiet unobtrusive attentions that arise from the sympathy of an affectionate heart, had endeared her alike to both mother and daughter; and her visit was repeated. Lady Kendal expressed her wish that Emily should visit the Boltons; and she now proposed that Mary and Captain Molesworth should remain at Oakley, to bear her company in her daughter's absence, and thus remove the objection she would otherwise raise of leaving her alone.

Emily went. With almost all those present it was a first meeting since death had visited

her home. She was still in mourning, and there was a tinge of sadness and of thought upon her countenance that reminded others of the loss she had sustained, since last they met ; and they showed in their greeting that they remembered her sorrow. It is easier to mingle with strangers, when first we emerge from the seclusion of grief, than again to meet the friendly faces we have known before ; to catch the meaning look ; to feel the expressive pressure of the hand, and to see repeated on each countenance the thoughts which swell our hearts to bursting. The tumult of woe has been tranquil at home ; and cheerful thoughts perchance have broken in, when the tears of affliction are spent. We are told that again we should mix with the world, and the sense of a duty compels our obedience. The effort is made ; and in the silent sympathy of those we meet something seems to whisper in our

ear that here we have no business. Our sorrow seems a spectacle to others : we shrink from the notice it creates ; and we would shroud from vulgar gaze a feeling so sacred. Emily tried to repress all emotion ; she knew she could add nothing to the gaiety of those who had met for social pleasure, but she strove not to seem as a cloud that shed gloom by its presence.

Among others now staying at the Duke of Bolton's were Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth. Mrs. Wentworth was in her brother's confidence respecting Lady Emily : she had written him word that Lady Emily was expected there, and accordingly he selected that time to propose making the visit he had promised to Denham. He was accepted ; and the day after Emily's arrival he came.

Emily knew from the duchess that Sir Edward and the Wentworths had met Dacre in Switzer-

land ; and though she hoped to be spared even the mention of his name, yet there was something in the idea of their having seen him so much more recently than herself, that made her feel both embarrassed and pleased at this meeting. Sir Edward now sought every opportunity of conversing with Emily without seeming to do so ; he adapted his tone to her present state of spirits ; he engaged her attention on general subjects that should not touch her feelings ; he was alive to what might give her pain ; he turned the conversation of others, when it seemed leading to observations or subjects that could distress her ; he seemed to court her friendship, and she viewed him as a friend.

The duke unconsciously aided these friendly intentions on the part of Sir Edward. Emily was to ride. It was long since she had been on horseback ; and she felt nervous at riding a

horse which the groom had declared was the gentlest of creatures, "quite free from vice, though just a little fresh or so sometimes."

"Bradford," said the duke, "you are more understanding in horses than I am; I wish you would ride Gazelle this morning, and say whether it will do for Lady Emily."

Sir Edward was well pleased with the task. Gazelle was pronounced fit for Lady Emily's use; and as she mounted at the door, the duke turned round to Sir Edward, saying, half in joke, and half in earnest, "Remember, Bradford, we shall hold you responsible for Lady Emily's safety to-day."

For a time the horse did justice to Sir Edward's recommendation; but unfortunately the ride was short, and the animal was but too well aware when he turned to go home. It fretted and pranced to get up to the horses

that went on before. Emily tried to check its eagerness, and its fore legs were just raised, as if going to rear. She felt the movement, but in a moment of fear she forgot her horsemanship, and tightly drew the rein. The horse reared up high in the air — for an instant they balanced — and then both fell to the ground.

Sir Edward sprang to her help. He placed his foot upon the fallen horse's neck, and stretching out his hand, assisted Emily to rise.

"Good heavens! you are hurt! say if you are hurt!" exclaimed Sir Edward, in a voice of the deepest alarm.

"No," replied Emily, as she regained her feet, "I believe I am not hurt."

"Are you sure?" rejoined Sir Edward, looking pale as death.

"Yes," replied Emily, moving a step, "I am quite sure that I am only a little shaken and frightened."

"To think that I should have risked your life!" exclaimed Sir Edward, in great agitation.

"I risked it by my own want of presence of mind," replied Emily, "so let me now redeem my folly by mounting again."

But Sir Edward would not hear of such a plan. His own horse was only rough in its paces, but perfectly quiet, and she should ride home on that.

Sir Edward could not recover the shock of the accident he had just witnessed. His hands trembled as he assisted the groom to change the saddles: his voice faltered as he described to the rest of the party how the fall had occurred; and he turned again and again to Emily, to see if she had really escaped all injury from the fall.

"I can never forgive my imprudence in having sanctioned your riding this horse," said he, as again they moved forward. "In my

selfish anxiety that you should ride, I pronounced too hastily on his disposition. You will never forgive me, I am sure."

"Indeed," replied Emily, with a smile that showed the sincerity of her words,—"indeed I would forgive you, Sir Edward, if I had any thing to forgive; but I am angry only with myself. I ought to have had more presence of mind, and I am ashamed of having caused so much trouble and alarm by my folly."

"I feel your kindness in saying so," said Sir Edward, "but I cannot blind myself to the fact. I can only thank God for your providential escape."

Emily was distressed to see how much Sir Edward was affected by this unlucky accident; and in her anxiety to free his mind from all suspicion that she blamed him for its occurrence, she was unconsciously adding vigour to

the feelings which were hourly strengthening towards her. Emily declared her wish to ride the horse the following day : " And then," said she, " if he throws me again, it will be nobody's fault but my own ; and if he goes well, I shall have to thank you, Sir Edward, for a very pleasant ride."

Every one objected to her making the experiment ; but she so positively assured the duke of her conviction that, now she was on her guard, no mischance would occur, that he consented, and immediately sent out orders for the animal to have a short allowance of corn, and a large allowance of exercise. The ride was performed with impunity and pleasure ; but this incident had much increased what Lady Emily considered only the friendship between herself and Sir Edward. Her desire to convince him that she owed him no ill will for the

disaster had made her almost seek to please him. There was no thought of love in her mind, and she dreamt not it might dwell in his. But Sir Edward felt encouraged by her kindness of manner.

CHAP. X.

Love under friendship's vesture white,
Laughs, his little limbs concealing ;
And oft in sport, and oft in spite,
Like pity meets the dazzled sight,
Smiles through his tears revealing.

ROGERS.

"EMILY," said the duchess, one day, "I think Sir Edward Bradford is a greater admirer of yours than ever."

"The admiration is quite mutual," replied Emily, smiling. "I believe he feels the same regard for me I feel for him."

"Unless your regard is of a stronger nature than I believe it to be," rejoined the duchess, "I suspect that you mistake his feelings."

"Why do you think so?" asked Emily.

"First tell me," said the duchess, "if you think you could give to him a warmer sentiment than friendship?"

"Caroline," said Emily, "how can *you* ask me such a question?" and the tears started to her eyes.

"I did not mean to wound you, love," said the duchess; and she kissed her; "but the reserve which exists between us on one point leaves me, you know, in ignorance of your feelings on such subjects."

Emily did not speak — her tears flowed fast.

"Caroline," said she at length, "I can never marry. You need never ask me again, if I could feel for any one a warmer sentiment than friendship. That is all I can give; and I hope and believe that you are mistaken in supposing Sir Edward seeks or wishes more."

"I hope, then, dear Emily, I am mistaken,"

replied the duchess; “but be on your guard not to give him false hopes. Remember, that if *you* mistake love for friendship, *he* may as probably mistake friendship for love.”

It is seldom, indeed, that friendship — pure friendship — exists, where love dares creep in. From the ties of kindred and of gratitude may spring affection in its purest form—regard, respect; but the friendship that arises from the conscious preference to each other's society — the friendship that induces the opening of the heart, the almost unrestrained confidence of feelings, thoughts, opinions — the friendship that lets the stranger know the secrets of our home, and yields to intimacy the claims which kindred only should assert — treads a dangerous path. The happiness of one, if not of both, is too often sacrificed in the vain endeavour to check the growth of feelings that are nourished

with fresh food. In single life, the wish for dearer ties will soon arise ; and often, too often, in married life, has the friendship, begun in innocence and honour, displaced the joy and peace it never can restore.

There are few whose vanity will not rejoice at the flattering distinction of being chosen confidant — few whose hearts can withstand the interest created by this dependence on the counsel, the confidence, or the sympathy of themselves ; and friendship, fairest, gentlest child of love, is soon exchanged for passion fierce and strong. Young hearts should beware how they tread in this path of delusion. The friend of the family may prove an admirer : he may win affections that he did not seek — may give his love to one who neither knows nor heeds its possession — he will see the cloud that is gathered on the husband's brow — he may hear the hasty

word, the harsh rebuke—then watch the tear that is shed by the wife for coldness or neglect; and from pity for the woman's sorrows springs the love that cannot, or that should not, be requited.

The duchess was right in her caution to Emily to beware of this delusion; and had she remained at Denham, she would have gradually withdrawn herself from Sir Edward's society, lest in him a hope should exist she did not mean to realise. But a letter from Lady Kendal determined her immediately to return to Oakley Park. The Molesworths were already gone. A letter had arrived, which told them of the rapidly declining state of Mr. Wakefield's health. Lady Kendal thought it right they should lose no time in going to him, and had persuaded them to set off for London within a few hours of that at which they received the intelligence.

Lady Kendal was now alone: the duchess,

therefore, offered no objection to Emily's wish to return home that day. Sir Edward and the duke had breakfasted early, were gone on a distant expedition, and had started before the post came in. Great was Sir Edward's disappointment to find that Lady Emily had already quitted the house, at which he had fondly hoped to spend a few more days in her company. But he was not without resource. He had made himself very agreeable to some of the country neighbours who were there; and, by some strange coincidence, he had become most intimate with those who lived furthest from Denham, and nearest to Oakley: and when they hoped that Sir Edward would give them the pleasure of his company at their respective houses, he very gladly accepted their invitations, and soon found himself again within reach of Lady Emily.

A year had elapsed since the death of Lord Kendal, and people again ventured to call at Oakley Park, and ask if Lady Kendal would receive them ; and in company with some, with whom Lady Kendal was well acquainted, Sir Edward also called. The party was admitted. Lady Emily was from home : but Lady Kendal, who had always liked Sir Edward, received him kindly ; and he hoped that from her he should encounter no opposition in his attentions to her daughter. Again Sir Edward rode over to Oakley, and Lady Kendal and Emily were both at home. Perhaps the consciousness of the duchess's observations on his preference for her society made her feel a little embarrassed in his presence ; but she was less at ease with him than she had been at Denham : he perceived that she was so, and he interpreted her embarrassment favourably to his views. He

knew that Lady Kendal had invited none in the neighbourhood to stay at Oakley, and he was not therefore discouraged in his morning calls, by not being asked to pay a longer visit.

“ Her ladyship is only in the garden with Lady Emily,” said the servant one morning, in answer to Sir Edward’s enquiries if Lady Kendal was at home; and into the flower-garden he was conducted. Lady Kendal was gone; she had just returned to the house; but Lady Emily was there: she shook hands with him, and then turning to the servant said, “ Let mamma know.” The servant returned, saying that Lady Kendal would immediately join them. In expectation of her coming they loitered about the garden: Emily coloured, and found it difficult to resume the easy, friendly footing on which she had been with Sir

Edward at Denham ; and she almost wished the duchess had never spoken to her on the subject, and excited these foolish suspicions.

Sir Edward was anxious, but sanguine ; and, like all sanguine people, he gathered hope when others would have feared : he augured well from this want of ease on her part. Lady Kendal did not come, and Emily proposed they should therefore return to seek her in the house ; but Sir Edward objected.

“ I would not for the world disturb Lady Kendal,” said he, with the most disinterested politeness ; “ I have no doubt she will come when she is disengaged. I am sure you cannot dislike being out of doors on such a lovely day, unless,” added he, with a little hesitation, — “ unless I weary you.”

Emily did not seem to hear the latter part of

his observation, but simply acquiesced in the day being fine, and turned down the walk that led towards the house.

“Lady Emily,” said Sir Edward, “I fear you are in a hurry to join Lady Kendal; but will you allow me to detain you for one minute?” Emily could not refuse; but it was evident she consented with more civility than pleasure. “I have now so seldom an opportunity of seeing you at all, and still less of speaking to you alone, that I hope you will not refuse me a few minutes’ conversation.”

“Certainly not,” replied Emily; “indeed I should hope you considered both ~~my~~ ^{my} mamma and myself too much as friends, not to know that we should be happy to listen to any subject in which you are interested.” She laid a slight emphasis on the word “friends,” and Sir Edward paused.

“ But *only* as a friend ? ” asked he, in a tone of disappointment.

“ Only as a friend, ” repeated Emily, firmly and distinctly; for she wished to spare him any further confession of feeling.

“ Then I must not speak to-day; but, ” continued he, with more agitation, “ may I not hope in time that you will allow me — ? ”

“ I will not deceive you, ” said Emily, still anxious to put an end to this conversation, — “ I will not deceive you; what I have said for the present includes the future.”

“ I implore you not to say so, ” rejoined Sir Edward, with great earnestness; “ do not speak so confidently of the future; surely time may work in you some change.” Emily blushed deeply, for she thought that Dacre was in his mind also. “ You have spoken to me as a

friend. Oh, Lady Emily, if your heart is not already engaged, may I not some day — ? ” Emily’s eyes were filled with tears.

“ Sir Edward,” she replied, as she struggled with her emotion, “ to none can I ever give more than the regard and friendship which you already possess.”

“ To none ? ” rejoined Sir Edward, in a tone of surprise, if not of incredulity. “ No, no, Lady Emily, I may never hope to be the person. It may have been presumptuous in me to have ever indulged such a thought ; but you are not — you cannot be — quite sincere when you say ‘ to none.’ ”

“ I cannot explain myself,” replied Emily, and her voice trembled till it was scarcely audible ; “ but I am sincere in saying that to none who would ask it have I more than friendship to give : — but do not let us talk

on this again," said she, making an effort to speak calmly; "let this conversation be forgotten."

"I hope at least that you are not offended with me," said he.

Emily extended her hand to him. "You cannot suppose that possible," she replied, in a conciliating tone; "Sir Edward, I value your regard: I am sure we understand each other now, and it will be better we should both forget what has passed; I would not willingly lose your friendship."

Lady Kendal now appeared: she had been detained in the house by some trifling domestic business, and knowing that Emily was with Sir Edward, had not felt obliged to hurry herself; she advanced to meet them, and no sooner had she spoken to him than Emily vanished. She flew to her room, and there

gave vent to the overpowering emotions which this explanation with Sir Edward had revived. She thought he had alluded to Dacre — she knew that she had alluded to him in her own mind ; memory quickly brought to her view the scenes of happy hours, and poignant sorrow connected with his name, and the tide of grief swept over her again, with all its wonted force and freshness.

Lady Kendal had seen in the nervous and dejected manner of Sir Edward, and in the traces of agitation that were visible in Emily's countenance, that something distressing must have passed in conversation between them ; but Sir Edward gave her no explanation.

“ Shall you stay much longer in this neighbourhood ? ” said Lady Kendal, as she wished him good morning.

He said “ no ” ; that he should go to his sister's the following day.

“ We shall always be glad to see you when you will call upon us in London,” said Lady Kendal, as she gave him the parting shake of the hand, and the friendly good-by.

Sir Edward departed, feeling how poor a compensation were these demonstrations of friendship and regard for the disappointment of knowing that he must never aspire to love.

Emily imparted to her mother all that had passed.

“ Are you sure, my love,” said Lady Kendal, “ that you could never return the preference of one for whom you now feel so sincere a regard ? ”

“ Quite sure,” replied Emily ; “ and no earthly power shall induce me to marry, when I cannot return the affection I receive.”

“ Sir Edward’s wife will be a happy woman,” said Lady Kendal, with a sigh.

“ She ought to be so,” replied Emily, “ and he will deserve to be made happy in return. I could neither feel nor confer happiness.”

“ My dearest child,” said Lady Kendal tenderly, “ do not suppose that I would urge you to marry any one with whom you could not be happy ; but it grieves me to think that your mind still clings to the object you have voluntarily renounced. You have had the courage to break off your engagement with Mr. Dacre ; to banish him from your sight ; will you not endeavour, dear, to banish him from your heart ? ”

Emily wept. “ I have done, mamma, what duty demanded ; but to forget him is impossible. Had he been to blame — had he forfeited my esteem — had he deserved the lot I have awarded him — I could have forgotten him ; but now I cannot.”

“ My dear Emily, my advice to you can have but one object — the object of your welfare,” said Lady Kendal ; and she spoke calmly while the tears stole gently down her care-worn cheeks : “ but remember, my life may not be long ; your brother is younger than yourself ; he will marry ; you may not like his wife ; you may not suit each other. It is true, your dear father has secured you from the evils of dependence ; but, my child, will you be happy in a lonely home ? You who have loved so dearly, and been cherished so fondly, will you be content to pass your days with none who look to you for comfort, with none to whom you can look in return for the daily, hourly tenderness which springs from mutual dependence and affection ? ”

“ No, mamma,” replied Emily ; “ I cannot, I shall not be happy, should such be my lot, but I will be resigned and useful, if I can.”

“ Consider well, my love, before you consign yourself to a life which you know will not satisfy your heart.”

“ It will, at least, satisfy my conscience,” replied Emily ; “ for how could I bear to marry any one whom I could not esteem ? and how treacherously should I betray the heart I had accepted, when I repaid its warm attachment by so cold a tribute to its merits ? ”

“ Emily, the young know little of the power of time ; I implore of you to aid its power by your own efforts. I do not ask you to marry Sir Edward Bradford. I will ask you only to allow him to continue, if he wishes it himself, on the terms on which he has hitherto been.”

“ I told Sir Edward this morning,” said Emily, “ that I wished our conversation to be forgotten, and that my regard for him was undiminished.”

“ I am glad you did so,” replied Lady Kendal ; “ and promise me now, my love,” continued she, “ that when we go to London you will, at least, give yourself the opportunity of becoming better acquainted with him. He is now to you as a declared admirer.”

Emily tried to speak.

“ I know if you speak you will say it is of no use — so say nothing, my dear. Do not commit yourself further on the subject. In doing so, we often confirm opinions that might otherwise change.”

Emily kissed her mother, and was silent.

CHAP. XI.

Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion.

As you Like it.

THE Molesworths had promised Lady Kendal to write from London, and to let her know whether she had not been right in advising them to go there immediately. The letter which had apprised them of Mr. Wakefield's illness was from a servant in the house, whose family had been in distress, and to whom Mary had shown kindness. This woman had occasion to write to Mary's maid, and she wound up her letter by saying that "her poor master was

not long for this world ; he was going very fast, and looked already more like a ghost than a Christian ; that it was a pity Captain Molesworth and his lady were not sometimes with him, though there might be some as did not think so." The maid gave this letter immediately to her mistress, and Mary showed it to Lady Kendal, asking her advice upon the subject.

This servant of Mr. Wakefield had, more than once, thrown out hints that Mrs. Shepherd "had two sides to her face," and had insinuated that she behaved less well to Mr. Wakefield than would appear before company. Mary, not thinking it right to obtain information from such a source, had never encouraged her to say more on the subject, but she had no doubt that the mysterious "some" who might wish not to see them was meant for Mrs. Shepherd.

Mary told Lady Kendal all she knew respect-

ing Mrs. Shepherd's history, and situation in Mr. Wakefield's house ; but, of course, no mention was made of that part of the story which concerned the miniature. It was more than probable that Dacre would have disliked to have those circumstances named ; and, indeed, to mention his name at all would have been scarcely possible, when Lady Kendal had herself so scrupulously avoided doing so.

Lady Kendal's advice was to lose no time in going to London : on that advice they acted, and once, since their arrival in town, Mary had written to Lady Kendal, saying how fearfully altered they had found her uncle, and how much they thought him daily declining, in spite of Mrs. Shepherd's constant observations on his rapid improvement. Lady Kendal and Emily were now expecting a second letter from Mary ; but it was long before they heard again. The

Molesworths were, of course, careful to give no hint of the letter which had brought them to town, lest the well-intentioned servant who had written it should be a sufferer ; but immediately on their arrival they proceeded to Mr. Wakefield's house.

Mrs. Shepherd was from home. Mr. Wakefield was seated, as usual, in the arm-chair by the fire-side ; but his back was supported by a pillow. His face was shrunk, his eye was more dim, and there was a general look of emaciation, which seemed to threaten his approaching dissolution. He recognised Mary and Harry, but did not seem quite aware that he had not seen them very lately.

“ I fear, uncle, by that pillow, that you have been ill since I saw you,” said Mary.

“ Thank you, my dear,” replied the old man, in a feeble voice ; “ I am much the same as

yesterday : you know Mrs. Shepherd has let me have this pillow ever since my illness."

" Mary and I have been out of town for some little time, my dear sir," said Harry ; " we did not know of your illness, or we should have come to you."

" Didn't know I was ill ! " replied Mr. Wakefield, in a tone of surprise ; and then putting his hand to his forehead, as if striving to bring back something to his recollection, said, " Very true ! I haven't seen you lately. My good Mrs. Shepherd said she had written to you ; and I think she said you called or sent to enquire after me : but it don't matter."

Harry told him he had received no letter from Mrs. Shepherd.

" Well, it don't signify, Mr. Bingley ; I can't be worried about business now ; " and he looked peevish and harassed as he said so. It was

evident that his recollection, even of persons, was much affected, and that he could not bear contradiction or explanation.

Mrs. Shepherd soon entered ; her face and throat were crimsoned over in a moment, as she saw the Molesworths sitting by their uncle's chair. They shook hands with her, and she in some degree regained her composure, if not her good-humour. Mary said how sorry they were to find Mr. Wakefield had been ill.

" It is nothing to call an illness, ma'am," replied Mrs. Shepherd ; " only Mr. Wakefield thinks so much of a cold ; but Dr. Davies says he is mending fast."

" So you say, my dear, but I don't feel much difference myself," said Mr. Wakefield : " you know I can't hold any thing in this hand now."

" To be sure not, sir !" replied Mrs. Shepherd, rather sharply ; " the doctor says it is a

work of time to recover the use of a limb; but," added she, in a more conciliatory tone, "I hope, sir, as long as I have the use of my hands, that you won't much feel the want of yours."

"Thank you, my dear, thank you," replied Mr. Wakefield; "I don't much want my hand now, that 's true." Mr. Wakefield seemed a little inclined to sleep, and Mrs. Shepherd made them a sign to follow her into the next room, lest the sound of voices should disturb him.

"I fear my poor uncle is very ill," said Mary, so soon as they had left the room.

"No, ma'am, not near so ill as he thinks himself," replied Mrs. Shepherd, in a more cheerful tone. "Old folks are so apt to think worse of their health than they need; but I have often seen him so before."

"Did he ever lose the use of his hand before?" enquired Harry.

“Not exactly,” replied Mrs. Shepherd; “but he will sometimes complain of one thing, and sometimes of another.”

“Pray, Mrs. Shepherd,” said Harry, and he looked steadily at her as he spoke, “did you write to inform us of Mr. Wakefield’s illness?”

“No sir,” replied Mrs. Shepherd, slightly embarrassed; “I did not take the liberty of writing to you.”

“I understood Mr. Wakefield that you had told him you had written, and that we had sent to enquire after him.”

“I certainly told Mr. Wakefield that you had sent to enquire,” said Mrs. Shepherd, “because he fidgetted at hearing nothing of you or Mrs. Molesworth, and I could not make him remember that you were out of town. I am sure, Captain Molesworth, I often wished you and

Mrs. Molesworth were here ; for it is very distressing to me, when any thing is the matter with Mr. Wakefield, to feel such a heavy responsibility." Mrs. Shepherd applied her handkerchief to her eyes.

" I can quite enter into your feelings there," said Mary, who could not suppose Mrs. Shepherd insincere, when she was moved to tears.

" I hope, Mrs. Shepherd," said Harry, in a serious, and rather marked tone, " that you will not allow that responsibility to weigh upon you in future : we shall always be happy to relieve you from that ; and as Mary is now Mr. Wakefield's only near relation, she is, of course, the person who should be sent for, whenever any thing is the matter." They then talked of Mr. Wakefield's present state ; and from that conversation it was evident that Mrs. Shepherd had thought him

very ill, but was sincere in her belief that he was now recovering.

Some days passed on : the Molesworths spent much of each day at Mr. Wakefield's, and no very perceptible change for the better or the worse appeared in his state. Harry had seen Dr. Davies, and had learnt from him the particulars of Mr. Wakefield's case : it was impossible he should recover, but it was also impossible to say whether the end was near. Dr. Davies had seen people linger for months under similar circumstances, or die in a few hours. Harry begged that, should any unfavourable symptom occur, he would instantly apprise him ; he also begged that he would not mention their interview to Mr. Wakefield or Mrs. Shepherd, as it might excite unnecessary alarm in them, to know that he had thought him sufficiently ill to have asked a private opinion of his state. Dr. Davies knew

the relationship in which Harry stood to Mr. Wakefield; and, as his own opinion of Mrs. Shepherd was not very favourable, he thought it possible that she might be capable of wishing to keep Mr. Wakefield's family from his death-bed, and promised faithfully that their conversation should be regarded as strictly confidential.

One afternoon, as they returned from their walk, they found a note from the Doctor was lying on the table: Mr. Wakefield was worse, and he advised their going to him. They did so: Mr. Wakefield was in bed; there had been some unfavourable symptoms in the morning, and he was weakened and did not get up. They remained in the house till Dr. Davies arrived. Harry thanked him by a look for his note: the Doctor made a sign to speak to him.

“All present danger is over now,” said he, in a whisper; “you may go home safely for to-night.”

Harry and Mary took their leave. Mrs. Shepherd and the nurse resumed their places.

“ I made a will — I told you so,” muttered Mr. Wakefield. Mrs. Shepherd gave the nurse permission to go down for some refreshment, and promised to ring when she wanted her. Mr. Wakefield was silent again.

“ Mary,” said he, at length, in a feeble voice.

Mrs. Shepherd whispered, “ Did you call, sir ? ”

“ Yes, my dear ; — Mary, I say — I have put it in my will : don’t tell Mrs. Shepherd.”

“ Why not ? ” whispered Mrs. Shepherd again.

“ She’ll be so angry ; she don’t like me to worry myself.”

“ Where is your will, uncle ? ” enquired Mrs. Shepherd, still keeping up the idea that he was addressing Mrs. Molesworth.

Mr. Wakefield told where it was : “ but

don't tell," added he, in a childish, frightened voice.

Mrs. Shepherd rose from her seat, withdrew the key from his bolster, unlocked the drawer he had mentioned, and found the will. Mr. Wakefield dozed. She untied the red tape which confined its folds, and then gently unfolded the paper. Mr. Wakefield moved in his bed, and muttered. She started, and trembled from head to foot ; but again all was quiet, and she began to peruse its contents.

The sum of money which she had persuaded Mr. Wakefield to promise in bequest to his niece, instead of a gift at her marriage, she had never intended should be bequeathed. She knew her power in inducing Mr. Wakefield to put off business, and she had flattered herself that this never would, and believed it never had been, made a part of his will. But though Mr.

Wakefield had not the courage to dispute with her, he had had the conscience to fulfil his promise ; and Mrs. Shepherd now actually held in her hand the document which was to bestow upon his niece a part of that fortune of which she had intended to possess herself. But what was her rage and disappointment at finding that not only to herself was bequeathed a sum far short of her expectations, but that she was to depend on the repayment of a debt due to Mr. Wakefield, to make up the amount of her legacy ; and that debt was the money lent to her cousin. Mrs. Shepherd's fury could scarcely be restrained. She could have torn with rage the paper that had thus brought to light the disappointment of her hopes : but she was not his heir-at-law, had there been no will. She hastily reached a pen and ink. Mr. Wakefield woke.

“Mrs. Shepherd!” said he, in a helpless, feeble voice; and Mrs. Shepherd started, as though a clap of thunder had pealed upon her: but there was no time to be lost. She approached the bed—the will in her hand.

“My dear! how good of you to stay with me!” said he.

“Sir!” said she, in a voice almost stifled with anger and agitation. “Sir! I know I have been good to you; and how have I been rewarded for my trouble?”

The old man looked at her—he did not understand her meaning, and made no reply.

“I have slaved in your service, and now *this* is your gratitude!”

“Oh, dear! what is the matter?” said Mr. Wakefield; and he began to cry.

“This, sir, is the matter!” said she, in a louder voice, and she unfolded the will before

him. "Here is pen and ink, and I desire you will instantly write as I bid you!"

"I can't write — indeed I can't, my dear!" said he, as he struggled with Mrs. Shepherd, who tried to place the pen within his hand.

"At your peril, refuse!" exclaimed she, in a voice of fury; and, wound up, by avarice, rage, and fear, to desperation, she shook him violently. He uttered a piercing cry; and, ere she had withdrawn her grasp, Harry Molesworth and his wife were in the room. With an exclamation of horror, Harry seized her by the arm, forced her into the adjoining apartment, and secured the door to prevent her escape.

"Mercy, mercy!" cried Mr. Wakefield, still weeping like a child; and it was long before he could be sufficiently pacified to explain what had passed. Mr. Wakefield said that Mrs. Shepherd had been very angry, and had wanted

him to write something, but what it all meant he did not know : but the will was lying on the floor, where it had fallen when the Molesworths entered, and that explained the probable object of her violence. Harry wrote down all that Mr. Wakefield could tell of the matter, and immediately sent for Dr. Davies. Mr. Wakefield repeated over and over again to Mary, "It is very hard : I'm sure she always said she was fond of me. Mary ! why did Mrs. Shepherd ill-use me ? I have been very kind to her." And then he cried, as if enough of sense and feeling still were left to have been wounded by her ingratitude. Mary watched by his bedside, whilst Harry went down to impart to Dr. Davies all that had passed.

Mr. Wakefield slept. The door was gently opened, and Dr. Davies and Harry entered. The noise awoke him, and he started, saying,

"Mercy, mercy!" and breathed thick and short.

"There is nothing to fear, my dear uncle," said Mary, soothingly.

"Thank you, Mrs. Shepherd, thank you, my dear," said he, and he sank back on his pillow. "I was dreaming. Oh, dear! such a dream! Mrs. Shepherd is always so good to me, I knew it wasn't true."

Dr. Davies approached the bed. The pulse of life had almost ceased to throb: in a few minutes more all was over. His soul had passed away; and the pleasing delusion, that he had not sheltered a serpent in his bosom, soothed the last thought of his weak, yet amiable mind.

CHAP. XII.

Cunning differs from wisdom as twilight from open day. Wisdom comprehends at once the end and the means, estimates easiness or difficulty, and is cautious or confident in due proportion. Cunning discovers little at a time, and has no other means of certainty than multiplication of stratagems and superfluity of suspicion.

JOHNSON.

MARY was much overcome by the scene she had just witnessed. She had often heard and read of death-bed scenes ; she had often thought on death : but to have seen a woman turn upon her benefactor in that awful moment, — to have heard the piteous cry of helpless infirmity at conduct so atrocious, — and then to have rejoiced at that twilight of intellect which had allowed him to close his eyes in peaceful error, was what she could never have expected. She

could scarcely think that human nature was so bad, and she recoiled from the knowledge she had so recently acquired. Harry and Dr. Davies persuaded her to leave the apartment; and then came the question of what was to be done respecting Mrs. Shepherd.

Mrs. Shepherd had certainly fallen a victim that day to the snare of the vicious and weak—opportunity. She had premeditated nothing which had passed with Mr. Wakefield, for she had fondly believed it unnecessary; but her curiosity, and, still more, her cupidity, was piqued by what had fallen from his lips, when addressing her as his niece. She thought herself safe from all possible interruption. The temptation was not resisted, and but for a trifling accident her guilt might never have been known.

The carriage which had conveyed the Molesworths to Mr. Wakefield's had been ordered to

wait at the door. When, therefore, it was called, the servant who had remained in the house expected to find it still there. It was not, however, in sight. Captain Molesworth desired he would seek for it : but there had been a mistake, and for a while the coachman could not be found. During this time, Harry and his wife had been in the room immediately below Mr. Wakefield's. Having taken leave of Mr. Wakefield for the day, they did not intend to disturb him by returning to his room ; they had, therefore, come gently up the stairs from the hall, to await the return of the carriage, and none knew they were not already gone. Mrs. Shepherd had heard the house door shut, and had felt herself secure at least from the interruption of their presence, when first the thought of yielding to the temptation before her had entered her mind. But the cry of the old man

was heard in the room where they waited. Their alarm added speed to their steps: they flew rather than ran up the single flight of stairs which brought them to his door, and discovered the scene already described.

Mrs. Shepherd was still a prisoner in the room into which she had been thrust by Harry in his first burst of indignation.

“What is now to be done with this wretched woman?” said he. “Would to heaven I could be for ever spared the sight of her again.”

“Who is she?” said Dr. Davies: “do you know any thing of her family?”

“We know nothing of her but from Mr. Wakefield. From him we learnt she came, many years ago, as nurse to his little boy; that she afterwards declared herself to be the widow of an officer; that her real name was Mrs. Harrison, and that she re-assumed her maiden name

of Shepherd, when reduced by poverty to descend from her proper grade in society."

Dr. Davies shook his head, with a look of incredulity. Harry then related the circumstance of the miniature, though without mentioning the name of Dacre.

"We might, I suppose," said Harry, "bring her to justice for her assault upon her dying master, and for this attempt to make him forcibly alter his will. But it would be of little avail to the dead; and could she be induced to reveal the truth concerning that miniature, it might be of importance to the living. What steps would you advise me to take?"

"It might be difficult," replied Dr. Davies, "in a court of justice, to prove her guilt, from the want of sufficient evidence; but perhaps the fear of further exposure may induce her now to confess the truth. It is not an easy matter to

offer any advice on such a subject ; but," added the Doctor, pulling out his watch, " I have a quarter of an hour more at my own disposal ; and, if you like, I will go to her, and then report in what state of mind I find her."

Harry gratefully accepted the offer, and in painful suspense they awaited his return from Mrs. Shepherd. It exceeded in duration the time which Dr. Davies had said he had to spare, and they feared the task of extracting from her any promise to reveal the truth had proved very difficult : but it was not so. Mrs. Shepherd was a woman of mean designs and low cunning ; but she had no courage. She was overbearing to the weak, or defenceless, but she cowered before those over whom she had no power. Her sudden detection had overwhelmed her with fear. The scheme which, though planned by another, had been so successfully prac-

tised by her, was now defeated. The web which had guided her tortuous path of deceit had snapped, as she had nearly reached the goal. Conscience-stricken she was not : she had not time to think of conscience ; for the disappointment of defeat, and the alarm at the possible consequences of her guilt, occupied all her thoughts.

Dr. Davies returned. — The Molesworths looked anxiously towards him for information.

“ I found her,” said he, “ trembling from head to foot : I told her that Mr. Wakefield was no more ; and her terror visibly increased at that information.”

“ Will she confess,” said Harry, “ to any deceit respecting her own history ? ”

“ Yes,” replied Dr. Davies, “ to as much as this — that she was never married, and that neither Shepherd or Harrison are her real

names." Mary and Harry looked at each other in surprise.

"Did she mention the miniature?" asked Harry, with eagerness.

"I mentioned it to her; but I told her, that I wished her to make no confession to me on that subject: I thought it was better, Captain Molesworth, that you should hear from her any thing concerning that part of her story, as it might be revealing secrets to which I had no right."

Harry thanked him for his delicacy. "What did she say when first you named to her the miniature?"

"It was then she confessed she had never been married; that she had never been acquainted with any Lieutenant Harrison; and that the picture was no longer in her possession. My advice to you now is, to go instantly to

Mrs. Shepherd, to write down in her presence whatever confessions you may further wring from her, and to make her sign her name, before witnesses, to this paper. I will call again in the evening, and if I can be of any further service in this curious and distressing affair, you will then tell me."

Harry followed the Doctor's advice. The hope of being spared a more public exposure had worked its full effect upon Mrs. Shepherd: her statement was written down by Harry, and, in presence of two witnesses, the paper was read and signed by Mrs. Shepherd. Mary was not present at this scene; but the excitement of all she had witnessed had been rather too much for her nerves; and scarcely had the witnesses accomplished the signature of their names, when a maid ran to inform Captain Molesworth that

she was lying on the floor as still as death. Harry grasped the paper in his hand, and rushed to the drawing-room, where he had left his wife: Mary had only fainted, and was soon restored to her senses. But the accident was favourable to Mrs. Shepherd; and when he returned to speak to her once more, she was gone.

The written document was immediately forwarded to Dacre, accompanied by an offer from Molesworth that he and Mary should meet him somewhere, for a short time, on the Continent, should he still continue to remain abroad. Mary wrote to Lady Kendal the account of all that had passed, saving that which would have obliged the mention of Dacre's name; and she also spoke of the possibility of their going soon abroad to meet a friend.

The duchess was at Oakley when the letter arrived, and to her it was handed for perusal. The fortunate discovery of so much deceit, the narrow escape of its success, and the pecuniary advantages arising to the Molesworths, from the timely detection of Mrs. Shepherd, were, of course, subjects of interest to the duchess, who had a regard for Mary and her husband. But there was one other passage in the letter which peculiarly engaged her attention : it was clear that the friend whose name was omitted, and for whose sake they now talked of a foreign expedition, could be no other than Dacre ; and she longed for an opportunity of making some allusion to this circumstance to Emily. She could hardly help entertaining a vague hope that, if the marriage had gone off from any cause that could ever be set right, it might be

effected through the medium of the Molesworths; and the more she marked the alteration in the spirits and health of her cousin, the more anxious did she feel that her engagement with Mr. Dacre should be renewed.

CHAP. XIII.

So I have seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hord, and at first it was as fair as the morning, and full with the dew of heaven as a lamb fleece; but when a ruder breath had dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness, and to decline to softness and the symptoms of a sickly age: it bowed the head, and broke its stalk, and at night, having lost some of its leaves, and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of weeds and out-worn faces.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

A FEW days afterwards, a paragraph appeared in a newspaper, which afforded the duchess an opportunity of mentioning Dacre to Emily. It was in one of the weekly papers, which generally announces even the rumour of marriages, between persons coming under the head of fashionable life, that the duchess saw, and read

that "an alliance was shortly about to take place between Francis Dacre, Esq. and the lovely and accomplished Miss Ashby ;" that the parties had been "spending the winter season at the Eternal City," and that it was understood Mrs. Ashby and her daughter would now soon return to England, accompanied by Mr. Dacre, in order that, the necessary arrangements and preparations might be made.

Emily took up the paper, whilst her cousin was sitting in her room. She saw her eye wander to that part where the paragraph was placed. She saw the colour mount to her face, and she was sure that the name had caught her attention. Her colour went—her lip quivered—and the paper fell gently on her knee, whilst she shaded her eyes with her hand.

"Emily," said the duchess, "I know what

you have just read : I, too, read that paragraph, but I also know it is not true."

"Then I am not so soon forgotten," exclaimed Emily; and a gleam of pleasure passed over her dejected countenance.

"Caroline, dear Caroline ! you are sure it is not true," said she, with an interest that showed how deeply engaged were her feelings on all that concerned him.

"I know, by the date, that this report is untrue," replied the duchess ; "for I have a letter with me at this moment from Rome, in which both the parties concerned are mentioned. Here it is : and you may judge by that of the improbability that any engagement should have then subsisted between them."

Emily read the letter, and returned it in silence.

"Caroline," said she, in her saddest tone,

“I fear I am even weaker than I thought myself. I thought I could have rejoiced at hearing he had forgotten me, and was happy; but you see I have not borne the test. This must not be. I wish I had not so much selfishness to subdue; but Heaven will aid me,” continued she, raising her eyes with a look of pious enthusiasm. “Perhaps I have trusted too much to my own weak spirit—but I will subdue these feelings.”

The duchess drew her chair by her side. She looked at her tenderly, and the tears stood in her eyes as she did so.

“You are not forgotten, my love,” said the duchess. “I do not think that Francis Dacre ever will forget you.”

“I must wish he should,” rejoined Emily.

“And must this always be?” said she.

Emily pressed her hand in token of assent.

“At your own request, my dear Emily,” continued she, “I have hitherto forbore to ask your entire confidence. You know that, except when I spoke to you of Sir Edward Bradford, I have never even alluded to your reserve with me on this one subject. I do not ask you to be open with me now, if it will add one pang to your too constant suffering; but you once said, that, in time, I should know all. When will that time be?”

Neither spoke for a moment. At length Emily rose from her seat, unlocked a cabinet, unsealed a packet which seemed carefully closed, and withdrew from it a letter.

“Now,” said Emily, in a trembling voice, “I will fulfil my promise. I could not bear, Caroline, to tell you at the time, lest you should differ from me in opinion. I thought the course I adopted was the course of duty. Had I dared

to listen to any arguments that sided with my feelings, I might not have proved firm. Read this," said she ; and, as she caught sight of the well-known writing of her father, she burst into tears. "It will explain better than I can ;" and she placed the letter in her cousin's hand.

The letter was one of affection and advice from Lord Kendal to his daughter. The beginning was replete with expressions of paternal love : he even spoke with gratitude of the comfort he had enjoyed in the possession of such a daughter, and hoped that, in reward, she would be as blessed in the children to whom she might give birth. Then came the paragraph which had struck the death-blow to her happiness.

"It is probable, my dear child, that, ere long, you will marry. Should you ever receive this letter, death will have deprived you of the ad-

vice and support of your father in the most important era of your existence. None of us can tell when, or in what manner, their death may occur; and you may stand an orphan, alone in the world, unaided by the cooler judgment and more extended experience of both your parents, when called upon to elect for yourself the guide and companion of your life. Pause and reflect, ere you commit your welfare—perhaps your eternal welfare—into the keeping of any one. Not only the happiness, but the character, of a wife may depend on that of her husband. I may not be with you—your dear mother may not be with you—to control your election; but I write, as from the grave, to guide your steps in the path of danger that may lie before you.

“Beware of the man on whose moral and religious principles you cannot depend. Beware

of the gambler ; beware of the gay and sprightly man of pleasure, whose profligacy is excused for his wit, and whose extravagance is pardoned, because it is reckless and social : beware of the tempter that would wound your feelings and disturb your peace ; and reject the flattering delusion, that you can school the vices you disapprove, or the failings you perceive. Choose, rather, as a husband, one who can guide, than the lover you would reform. I would not have you marry one who moved not in the same station of life as yourself. What is termed a *mésalliance* bears within itself the seeds of disunion and disappointment. You may think it pride that dictates this opinion, but experience has strengthened it in my mind.

“One other feeling I have—by some it may be called a prejudice ; but as such I do not regard it : I would not have you give your hand to

one on whom the stain of illegitimacy is set. Once, my dear girl, the thought occurred to me, that one, who laboured under that stigma, rather sought your society: but I believe I was mistaken; and, for his sake, I hope I was. For you I have never yet felt fear, as I believe your heart is still untouched, as when a child, by any sentiment of love. In character you may be deceived, but on this objection of birth, there can seldom be any doubt. Do not ever, therefore, expose yourself to the danger of forming an attachment with any who are placed under such circumstances. Remember my feelings—my prejudices (call them what you will)—on that subject; and let the guardian eye of a parent watch over the destinies of his child, though closed for ever in the sleep of death.”

The duchess read the letter. What a letter was that, to have received at such a time as

when it first was placed in the hands of the bereaved and sorrowing daughter of its writer ! What daggers to her heart were the words of kindness it contained ! The parent tree had died, and with its fall had crushed the tender shoot that should have filled its place.

There is a power in the irrevocable words of the departed which seems almost too great to be wielded by man. His life cannot prepare him for the task. From lisping infancy to babbling age, he speaks with little thought, and trusts more to the power of retraction than to the wisdom of foresight. His understanding cannot grasp the full effects that spring from the causes he creates. He has rendered immutable the decrees he would himself have revoked in time. It is the way of heaven, and the word of God, that should alone be immutable. The essence of man, in his perishable state, is change ;

and when a frail and mortal being would strive to copy Heaven, and fix the fate of man, too often falls upon the victims of his presumptuous thought the curse that keeps the promise to the ear deceiving in the hope. The dying injunction is followed—the parting command is obeyed—and, lo ! the misery it would have averted has fallen—the joy it would have blighted is preserved.

The words of dying men acquire something of the power which only inspiration ought to claim. They are hallowed in our minds, as the thoughts of one on whom we can no longer think as clogged and blinded by the frailties of our nature. We feel as if the spirit, winged for flight, had already caught the light of a higher and a purer state, and was gifted with wisdom superior to those it addresses in parting. But it is an abuse of power to strive to reign where we have ceased to live—to guide the actions

that we cannot see—to govern those whose responsibility is not lessened by this human check upon their will. Man only knows the past: of the present he can rarely judge—of the future he knows nothing. Let him then remember, that his judgment is ever fallible, and his ignorance unenlightened. Let him remember, even in the awful moment when the gates of eternity are open to receive his soul, that to him has no divine mission been given to control the fate he is not able to foretell.

Lord Kendal knew that he had always in theory disapproved of his daughter's marriage with one in Dacre's situation: he knew not that on him her affections were placed. He little thought that, in trying to avert what he deemed a possible evil to his child, he had struck a blow more fatal to her happiness than any which even his paternal anxiety could suggest.

The duchess held the letter in her hand for a minute ere she could speak. "You have made a noble sacrifice," said she at length: "may Heaven reward you for this obedience to your father's wishes."

"I cannot call this sacrifice a noble one, for I fear it has been made less cheerfully than it ought."

"No Emily, could it have been cheerfully made, it could hardly have been the sacrifice it now has been. Your mother saw this letter, I suppose?" said the duchess enquiringly.

Emily said she had.

"And she approved of the step you took in consequence of its contents?"

"She did. And do you not also approve of that step?" rejoined Emily.

"My love, I cannot but approve and admire the feeling in you that would resign all things rather than the path of duty: your intentions

alone would sanctify your deed in such a case. But, oh ! that your poor father had but known of the attachment that subsisted ! ”

“ That,” interrupted Emily, “ is the point which has added greatly to my mother’s sorrow. She blames herself for want of courage in not having told him all that concerned us : but the step I took at least afforded her the comfort of feeling that his wishes were as much obeyed as if he had known all ; and I could almost rejoice that he was spared the task of refusing his consent to what I believed could alone secure my happiness.”

The duchess made no reply : she read the letter again, and then, for a while, seemed lost in thought. The silence was at length broken, by her asking Emily if she would allow her to inform the duke of all that she had just learnt. “ Yes,” replied Emily, “ if you wish it : he will, I am sure, see the absolute necessity of

preserving a secret which, were it ever known, might deeply wound the feelings of another."

"On his secrecy you may rely," rejoined the duchess, "and I should like to hear his opinion. My aunt will not, I hope, object to talking with us both on this subject."

"No," replied Emily; "I believe mamma rather wished you should be acquainted with the contents of that letter; but I have always shrunk from even speaking to her of him — of my father's letter — of all that happened at that dreadful time" — and she shuddered as she spoke.

"Emily, your father wished for your happiness. Had he still been alive, and known that your attachment was formed, and that it was no childish fancy, I do not believe that his objection would have withstood the sight of your sorrow."

“ Oh Caroline, do not try to persuade me of that: you could not convince me; and if you could, to what purpose would it now be, but to increase my wretchedness ? ”

“ I may never convince you — I may not even wish to do so; but, my dear, if you were convinced, and if Mr. Dacre was still constant, surely your wretchedness would not *then* be increased ! ”

“ Caroline ! ” replied Emily, with some excitement of manner, “ if my dear father’s objections could be at this moment removed, — could Mr. Dacre become Lord Hexham tomorrow, — it would be too late — not even then should I be his wife. I have told you the cause that broke off our engagement — another cause must ever prevent its renewal.”

The duchess looked surprised.

“ Then I have not your entire confidence ? ” said she.

“I have told you all that broke it off,” replied Emily: “the rest is not material, for there never can be question of its renewal.”

“You are resolved, then, dear, to adhere to the resolution you made on first reading this letter?”

“Nothing can alter my fate,” replied Emily: “it is too late for any change to affect my lot; but, dear Caroline, I implore you to urge me no further: nay, more, I must entreat that, should you speak to my mother on this unhappy subject, you will to her make no allusion to the existence of that other cause, which must *for ever* prevent the possibility of any renewal of an engagement which I have voluntarily renounced. Of that other cause she knows nothing — there is no reason why she should: that secret will probably die with me.”

The entrance of a servant to summon Emily

to her mother's room interrupted all further discourse. The duchess endeavoured once more to renew the conversation, but in vain : Emily was never disposed again to allude to the subject.

The train of daily occupation went on ; and though all had ceased to yield to Emily their wonted pleasure, they helped the time to pass unheeded on, and to spare her from the listlessness that would have increased her painful consciousness of its dull and laggard flight. The day was fixed for their return to London. It was a sad return to the scene of all their bitterest grief ; and Emily had no spirits to enter into society. A few morning visitors were alone permitted to break the monotony of their secluded life ; and amongst the most frequent of those visitors was Sir Edward Bradford.

CHAP. XIV.

There is given
 Unto the things of earth, which Time hath bent,
 A spirit's feeling; and when he hath leant
 His hand, but broke his scythe, there is a power
 And magic in the ruin'd battlement,
 For which the palace of the present hour
 Must yield its pomp, and wait till ages are its dower.

BYRON.

It had reached Dacre's knowledge that Sir Edward had been at Denham when Lady Emily was there: it was Mrs. Ashby who had given him the information. She had heard of it from Lady Whitby, for Lady Whitby loved to hear and to retail all the news that could be gathered; and the report that Sir Edward Bradford was an admirer of Lady Emily Somers had travelled

through the not unusual channel for such reports to circulate. Sir Edward's gentleman remarked to Mrs. Wentworth's lady, that his master was very attentive to Lady Emily, and Mrs. Wentworth's lady passed on the information to Lady Whitby's lady; and, notwithstanding Lady Whitby's never failing sense of her own exalted position, she often condescended to beguile the fatigues of her toilette by listening to whatever her maid might have to relate.

Lady Whitby was also so condescending as to wish that one of "the Ashby girls" should marry. Mrs. Ashby had often hinted at the probability of Dacre's admiration for her eldest daughter; she rejoiced, therefore, to hear that Lady Emily Somers was likely to be removed as a rival to her friend, and she speedily exaggerated the report of Sir Edward's admiration into something little short of a mutual attach-

ment. Mrs. Ashby had always suspected that a preference for Lady Emily had been the obstacle which checked the progress of Dacre's devotion to her Julia. Nothing, therefore, could be more welcome than all that "dear" Lady Whitby's letter contained, respecting Lady Emily.

But Mrs. Ashby was a very wary woman, and she was careful that Dacre should know what she wished him to hear, without running the risk of offending him by the communication: she therefore addressed herself to a third person, to mention that "They say that beautiful girl, Lady Emily Somers, is going to be married." "To whom?" was the natural question in reply; but Mrs. Ashby looked mysterious, and believed it was not yet declared, and she was not, therefore, at liberty to say more. All this was said within Dacre's hearing, and he heard it.

Soon afterwards Mrs. Ashby took an opportunity of alluding to her English news to him; and she was then so glad to hear that Lady Emily Somers had at last recovered her spirits! "She has been, I hear, at Denham, where it is, you know, always so pleasant!" (Mrs. Ashby never was there.) "They had a very agreeable party, I believe: the Wentworths, Sir Edward Bradford, the author of —, and a few more: just the sort of intellectual party, you know, that they always get together."

Dacre made little remark in reply to Mrs. Ashby's communications: he felt sure that, whether true or false, it was to Sir Edward Bradford that report had given Lady Emily. He thought it strange that Harry Molesworth should not have written him word of this report—he, who knew how painful it would be to hear such rumours from the mouths of strangers,

without knowing on what foundation they were raised ; and for a moment he was vexed, if not angry, with his friend.

Miss Ashby saw that Dacre looked unusually depressed : she exerted herself to the utmost to soothe his melancholy, and, though her languor was not diminished, her flattery was increased. To conceal his real feelings, Dacre affected gaiety ; and, as Mrs. Ashby looked on, she felt satisfied that her long hoped-for project was in a fairer way for success than it had yet been.

Whenever Mrs. Ashby was sanguine, she became active in sight-seeing, and expeditions.

“ What a lovely night for seeing the Colosseum by moonlight ! ” said she, as she threw up the window. Mrs. Ashby’s observation was eagerly assented to : all agreed it would be quite a sin to miss such an opportunity : the carriages,

in waiting at the door were put in requisition, and to the Colosseum they drove.

Luckily for Dacre, a cavalier more anxious, and less welcome than himself, had offered his arm to Miss Ashby. Cecilia was in the high-tide of flirtation with Mr. Fitzgerald, who was now just recovered from the malaria fever ; and Mrs. Ashby fearing to deprive her daughters of those by whom it was desirable they should be escorted, had eagerly secured to herself the only married man of the party. Dacre was thus enabled to linger behind, and to indulge in the thoughts to which the scene gave rise, without the interruption of such remarks as would not harmonise with his own feelings. He kept within reach of the light which guided them, but not within hearing of the conversation going on.

A brother of some monastic order led the way

up the flight of time-worn steps that conducted them to the place, which afforded the most striking view of the building. The light of the lamp which was carried by this guide brought out in strong relief his long, loose robe, secured by a cord, and the shining head, where age had swept away the hard line of the tonsure. The rest of the party, enveloped in cloaks and shawls, followed as a dark and moving mass behind him, and their voices were now hushed to a whisper. The effect was picturesque and striking: it seemed not to belong to the age in which we live; and Dacre was beginning to enjoy something of that dreamy happiness, which exists only when we can shut out the present by the thoughts of the past, or the anticipation of the future.

There are times when even the consciousness of our own identity seems an interruption to the en-

joyment of the scene before us. There are times when we would wish to forget the very name we bear—to forget the sorrows, the joys, the story of our own life—to cast away all that is individual—to think of man as a multitude—to think of ages in place of years—to turn from the spot in which we live to the universe created around us. These are the times when the soul seems to start from the frame which encases it, and wings its lofty flight above the matter where it dwells. It is then we seem endowed with a capacity of thought beyond our usual power, and dread to be recalled by some dull reality from the land of fancy into which we have strayed. When the imagination is thus exalted by enthusiasm, who has not desired the oblivion of self? It is said that no man is a hero to his servant: still less can he be a hero to himself: and when the mind is elevated by the scene

without, and the thoughts within, he shrinks from the recollection of his own insignificance, and would forget the common-place details of character and feeling, of which he knows himself to be composed.

The night was clear, serene, and warm : the sky was decked in all its brightest gems, and the moon shed around a light which half recalled the daylight blue of heaven. The irregular outline of the building caught the moonbeams as they fell, and by this partial illumination its dimensions seemed magnified even beyond its real size. Time has now worn away the neatness and regularity that mark the hand of man ; and this edifice, which has withstood the destruction of decay, and the rude assaults of war, stands forth like a feature of nature itself, and partakes of the sublimity which belongs to her works.

When we think on the strange vicissitudes to which this structure has been applied, the lesson comes home to our hearts, how little he who sows can tell who shall reap the fruits of his labour ; and when we gaze upon that now peaceful arena, where the warm blood of life has gushed in savage sports, and cruel martyrdom,—when we remember that this building was based on the Pagan hatred to the believers in revealed religion—that it was erected to commemorate the conquest of Judea, and devoted to the execution of persecuted Christians,—when we remember this, and behold its splendid ruins, preserved from pillage and destruction by their consecration to that mild faith whose early converts died upon this stage,—we rejoice to see that good has been thus returned for evil. We triumph in the fall of heathen barbarity, but still more do we glory in this type of our Christian profession.

“Dear, how pretty !” exclaimed Miss Cecilia, with great energy; and Dacre’s dream was over. “Only see,” continued she, “how like a transparency that dear old ruin looks by moonlight !”

The observation was addressed to Mr. Fitzgerald; and, as he thought Cecilia decidedly pretty, and cared nothing for the moonlight, he assented to her observation.

Miss Ashby drew near to Dacre, and audibly sighed.

“It makes one very melancholy to see such a fine theatre all in ruins ! don’t you think so, Mr. Dacre ?”

Dacre said it was very melancholy, but he made no further remark.

“I suppose,” continued she, with great gravity, “it must be from the old theatres that we

have borrowed the idea of Astley's Amphitheatre."

Dacre smiled. "If so," said he, "it is fortunate that we have not extended our imitation to the exhibitions displayed on this stage."

Miss Ashby said nothing; for she did not know to what exhibitions he alluded. Mrs. Ashby proposed that they should sit down to enjoy the scene better, and Miss Ashby kindly made room for Dacre to place himself at her side.

"One could sit here for ever!" said she, in her usual languid tone; "there are such delightful associations in these ancient buildings."

"Delightful!" replied Dacre, in a tone of *persiflage*; "and here one can sup so full of horrors! There is something so soothing and agreeable in the recollections of all the ani-

mal and moral suffering that has been witnessed and endured in this spot ! ”

“ It is very soothing indeed,” rejoined Miss Ashby, quite persuaded that it was so.

“ What capital bat-fowling one might have in this queer old place ! ” said Fitzgerald, who had not long passed the age, and by no means outgrown the tastes, of schoolboyism.

“ What delightful spirits ! ” said Mrs. Ashby ; and then addressing Dacre in a low voice, observed, “ How you and Julia must enjoy this scene ! This is the sort of pleasure that is real enjoyment to her : she has no taste for the world.”

Dacre said nothing, for he felt that her daily life was a contradiction to this assertion.

“ There never was such a contrast as between those dear girls of mine,” continued Mrs. Ashby in a confidential tone. “ Cecilia is very gay and

lively ; but she has not the quiet, domestic habits of her elder sister. She is certainly not so intellectual ! ”

“ Miss Cecilia’s cheerfulness is very inspiring,” observed Dacre.

“ Yes,” said Mrs. Ashby, “ her gaiety suits some people ; but I always tell Cecy it requires to be in spirits oneself to bear her liveliness.”

“ Do you think so ? ” replied Dacre. “ I always find, on the contrary, that liveliness in others raises my spirits when they are depressed. In short,” continued he, “ I always like best whatever least resembles myself.”

Mrs. Ashby was struck dumb by this observation. It was clear she had made a great, she feared, an irretrievable mistake. It was Cecilia, and not Julia, who should have captivated Dacre. How vexatious to think that all her time and pains had been wasted ! that so much

money had been uselessly spent in cultivating in her the tastes that did not exist ! And now, what was to be done ? Something fresh must be planned : her favourite project had fallen to the ground : some other must be devised to secure to Dacre the inestimable prize of one of her daughters as a wife. One thing was clear — there would be no use in staying any longer at the Colosseum.

“ We must tear ourselves away,” said Mrs. Ashby : “ we forget that time flies ; but supper will be ready *chez nous*, and we must really return. Mr. Fitzgerald, it is very bad for you to be out so late ; you must go back in the close carriage.”

Fitzgerald objected to this kind consideration for his health ; but Mrs. Ashby was positive, and Fitzgerald was not allowed to return in the same carriage with Cecilia.

CHAP. XV.

He that stands upon a slippery place
Makes nice of no vile hold to stay him up.

King John.

ON Dacre's return to Mrs. Ashby's apartments, he found his own servant waiting, who had come to tell him that a gentleman, arrived from England that evening in Rome, had called at his house, and left his card and a message, to beg that Mr. Dacre would call upon him immediately at the hotel, as he wished to deliver into his own hands a packet which had been confided to his care. Dacre, looking at the name, remembered that one so called had been a friend of Harry Molesworth's. The idea that some

sad intelligence awaited him instantly crossed his mind. He hardly knew what to anticipate : but his anticipations were seldom cheerful ; and, hastily taking leave of Mrs. Ashby, he repaired to the hôtel. Dacre sent up his card, and was soon in the presence of the mysterious bearer of the interesting packet.

As he entered the room, he looked eagerly to see if the stranger's countenance betrayed the consciousness of any distressing communication ; but there was not the slightest trace of agitation to be seen on the young man's face, as, with good-humoured civility, he expressed his regret that he had not found him at home when he called.

"I was anxious," continued he, "to fulfil my promise to our mutual friend Molesworth, of delivering into your own hands, without delay, a packet of which I am the bearer." Dacre

thanked him. "Here it is," said he, unlocking his writing-case. "I hope it has not been inconvenient to you to call this evening; but Molesworth made so great a point of this being given to you immediately on my arrival, that I thought it better to leave word at your house that I had the packet in my care. Perhaps you expected it?"

"No!" replied Dacre, "I expected a letter from Molesworth last post, but none arrived; and I was, therefore, expecting to hear from him to-morrow."

The young man smiled. "I told him," said he, "that I should beat the post, when I offered to take charge of his letter—and so I have."

Dacre took the packet in his hand: it was sealed with black, and he did not dare even to glance at its contents till he had reached his home.

The packet contained not only a long letter from Harry, relating the circumstances of Mr. Wakefield's death and Mrs. Shepherd's conduct, but also the statement, to which she had, in presence of witnesses, subscribed her name. That statement at once surprised, perplexed, distressed, and pleased him ; but he was bewildered by the information it afforded, and the feelings to which it gave rise ; and it was some time ere he could determine what line of conduct he should pursue. There was no one with whom he felt he could consult : Crofton was at Naples, and with none other did he feel inclined to discuss a subject so deeply interesting to himself. But there was no time to be lost, and before he even attempted to close his eyes that night, his resolution for the morrow was fixed.

Early the next morning Dacre quitted the house, and, with a nervous, hurried step, he

walked to Mr. Harper's lodgings: there was a slight demur to his admittance, but he begged his name might be taken up, and that Mr. Harper might be told he wished to see him a few minutes on business. Harper was surprised, and, perhaps, a little disconcerted by this message; but Dacre was admitted.

"Mr. Harper," said he, "I am sorry to have intruded upon you so early in the morning, but I was anxious to speak to you."

"No intrusion, I assure you, Mr. Dacre," replied Harper, and he gave him a short, suspicious glance, as if he would ascertain on what errand he had come.

"I believe, sir," said Dacre, "that I am not mistaken in the fact that you are well acquainted with a lady of the name of Shepherd."

Harper shook his head, and turned away, as he replied that he knew nobody of that name.

“ I am aware, ” rejoined Dacre, “ that *Shepherd* was but the assumed name of the person in question ; but, Mr. Harper, you will not, I believe, deny your acquaintance and relationship with the lady residing at Mr. Wakefield’s, who was generally called by that name, who was supposed by Mr. Wakefield to be the widow of Lieutenant Harrison, and whose real name was neither Shepherd nor Harrison.”

“ Really, sir,” replied Harper, in a tone as if offended by Dacre’s question, “ I cannot conceive in what manner it can interest you to know with whom I am either acquainted, or related.”

“ Perhaps not,” said Dacre, more carelessly, “ but the object of my enquiry may be of consequence to you, sir, if not to me.”

Harper looked inquisitively at him.

“ You are, I suppose, not yet aware of the very recent death of Mr. Wakefield ? ”

“ Mr. Wakefield dead ! ” exclaimed Harper, and a look of satisfaction, rather than of sorrow, shot across his face.

“ Yes, sir,” replied Dacre, gravely, “ Mr. Wakefield is dead, and you are, I presume, the Mr. Harper whom he has mentioned in his will.”

“ Certainly,” replied Harper, forgetting all other consideration in his anxiety to avow himself as one mentioned in the will.

“ Then, sir,” said Dacre, looking at him steadfastly in the face, “ you are the person in whose possession is the miniature which passed for the portrait of Lieutenant Harrison.”

Harper reddened, and spoke quickly : “ If you have any thing,” said he, “ to tell me about Mr.

Wakefield's will, I beg you will do so; but, sir, upon any subject that concerns one of my relations, I am not bound to answer the questions it may please you to ask."

"What I ask you, Mr. Harper," replied Dacre, sternly, "concerns rather my family than yours: the miniature to which I allude is the portrait of my father, and to none can that be of as much value as to his son."

"You forget, my good sir," rejoined Harper, with his contemptuous smile, "you have offered no proof that the miniature in question is in my possession, and still less that it is the portrait of your father."

"My proofs, Mr. Harper, on that subject, are, I believe, indisputable," said Dacre, in a firm, decided manner; and, drawing from his pocket the statement made by Mrs. Shepherd, he placed

it on the table, begging Harper would peruse its contents.

Harper snatched up the paper, and his eyes glanced quickly over the writing : " This is the work of intimidation," said he, angrily ; and crushing the paper in his hand, he held it, unperceived by Dacre, to the lighted taper that stood on the chimney : in a moment it was in a blaze.

" Your proofs have ended in smoke, sir," said he, with a smile of coarse humour.

" It is immaterial," said Dacre : " you have burnt only the copy ; the original is still in my possession ; and your conduct has confirmed my belief in its contents."

Harper looked angry and disconcerted.

" Mr. Harper, I know not to what purpose you would deny me the possession of that pic-

ture," said Dacre. "To me only can the portrait be of real worth; but if you have attached to its setting any pecuniary value, I shall be happy to pay the price you ask."

"The portrait may be of greater value to me than the setting," replied Harper, doggedly; "and if I possess the picture, I shall probably retain it."

"*If* you possess it, sir?" replied Dacre, angrily: "you cannot — you dare not — deny the truth of that woman's confession, or you would not have destroyed it. Have a care, Mr. Harper! have a care! your character is one which will not stand another breath of scandal: it already totters; a straw would make it fall."

"I have friends who will take care of my character, thank you, Mr. Dacre!" replied Harper, with insolent carelessness.

"I doubt their existence," said Dacre, warmly.

"Yet foremost in that number may stand your own particular friend!" replied Harper.

"Whom do you mean?" enquired Dacre.

"No other than Mr. Crofton! Whilst Crofton lives I shall never want a friend," rejoined Harper, with great coolness.

"Be not over confident," said Dacre, emphatically. "Crofton may befriend the unfortunate, but I believe, sir, you know that he will not countenance the dishonourable."

Dacre fixed his eyes upon him as he spoke. Harper shrunk from his piercing look.

"Mr. Crofton will never play me false," said Harper, with a tone of assumed confidence.

"Crofton will never sanction false playing in others," replied Dacre: "but, Mr. Harper, this is nothing to the purpose. Consider the conduct of your relative; consider your own position, as

having been privy to the deceit which was practised upon her benefactor. She has confessed her name to be the same as yours. She has declared that to serve you she persuaded Mr. Wakefield to advance money to a considerable amount. She has confessed that from you she obtained the picture she represented as the portrait of Lieutenant Harrison — that she believes it to be that of Major Dacre, and that it was at your own request she returned it to you, when informed that it had excited my attention. Mr. Harper, remember all this; I have asked but a trifling favour: and,” continued he, with renewed energy, “it will be unwise in you to refuse it.”

“Sir! would you threaten me?” said Harper, angrily. “You think me in your power; you little know,” added he, with a bitter smile, “how much more you are in mine.”

Dacre started; and indignantly demanded explanation.

Harper was silent for a few minutes. "You offered, just now, Mr. Dacre, to pay the price I demanded for that picture. It may be worth your while, sir, to be liberal."

"Name your price," said Dacre, contemptuously.

Harper paused for a moment; then sitting down to the table, he wrote a few lines, sealed up the paper, and presented it to Dacre.

"I have written down the terms on which I will consent to transfer the picture to you. You will read this when you get home. The sum may seem large to you; but take my advice, sir," said he, in rather a familiar tone, "do not reject my offer hastily. I shall expect your answer before night."

Dacre named the hour when he would call

again, and was beginning to say something more, when Harper interrupted him.

“ There is no use in further discussion on this subject ; for on these terms only will I part with this picture, and with all that can make it desirable for you to have it, or for me to retain it.”

Dacre was, indeed, startled to find on opening the paper, how large a sum had been named. It was evident that Harper was in possession of some secret connected with the miniature ; and in his first eagerness to learn that secret, Dacre felt inclined to agree to the terms proposed. A moment's reflection told him it was impossible. He had already bound himself as security for Crofton to so large an amount, that it was impossible to form any fresh engagement, without at least the risk of utter ruin. Should he ever be made answerable for Crofton's debt to

Harper, he could not satisfy the present exorbitant demand, without reducing himself to a state of beggary. Crofton had declared that in a few months he would release him from his suretyship. Till that release he had no right to bind himself further ; but the more he considered the manner and words of Harper, and the extraordinary value he had attached to the miniature, the more desirous he became to agree to the terms proposed. He thought of writing to Crofton — of stating to him his position ; and of trying, if possible, to make some such arrangement as would place him at liberty to negotiate further with Harper. He determined to keep his appointment that afternoon, and hoped then to obtain either a reduction in terms, or the power of delay, ere he gave his final answer.

CHAP. XVI.

Like wind the bounding courser flies ;
 Earth shakes his thundering hoofs beneath ;
 Dust, stones, and sparks in whirlwind rise ;
 And horse and horseman pant for breath.
 BÜRGER's "*Leonora*," translated by SPENCER.

IN the course of the morning Dacre called at Mrs. Ashby's, in order to apologise for his abrupt departure the preceding evening. Whilst sitting with Mrs. Ashby, the two young ladies, their riding chaperon, and Mr. Fitzgerald, entered: they had just returned from their ride; and a few questions were asked and answered, respecting the route they had taken, &c. They had been

on the Albano road. Miss Ashby said her nerves had been dreadfully shaken: she had been alarmed at a carriage driving furiously by; and though she confessed her horse was not frightened, she had not recovered the fear that he would have started; and she looked at Dacre as if she expected he would be touched by this feminine weakness. But Cecilia, who was wholly uninterested in her sister's false alarms, had meanwhile engaged his attention by describing the carriage, and the pace at which it was going.

“Who can it be?” said Mrs. Ashby, afraid lest any should have departed whom she wished should remain.

“It just occurs to me who it was — I am sure of it,” exclaimed Cecilia, with great animation; “I thought it was somebody I knew; and now I remember, it must have been that

odd man that I could never get on with : you all know who I mean," said she, trying to recall his name : but nobody knew who she meant by that description ; till at last she remembered "Mr. Harper."

"Harper !" repeated Dacre, with unfeigned surprise and interest.

"So it was," said Fitzgerald, reddening as he spoke : "I thought I knew the carriage again : I have an eye for a carriage, go what pace it will."

"I must wish you good-morning, Mrs. Ashby," said Dacre, rising to depart. "I have business with Mr. Harper, and I am anxious to ascertain whether he has quitted Rome."

"I will come with you," said Fitzgerald ; "for, to say the truth, I should be sorry enough, on my own account, to find he had gone so abruptly."

So saying, they both quitted the house immediately ; and Cecilia secretly wished she had never given utterance to her surmise respecting the flying traveller.

“ Do you know much of Harper ? ” enquired Fitzgerald, as they walked quickly along. Dacre said he had very little personal acquaintance with him.

“ I hope he is not a rogue,” said Fitzgerald.

Dacre made no reply.

“ If this fellow should turn out a sharper, I shall be the loser by some hundreds more than I can afford,” observed Fitzgerald.

“ Indeed ! ” exclaimed Dacre, “ I am sorry to hear it.”

They had now reached the door of Harper’s abode : no one was at home who could or would tell them any thing of Mr. Harper’s movements : he was not within ; but beyond that no information could be obtained. Fitzgerald

proposed going to the place where Harper's carriage had stood. They did so: the carriage was gone — there was no doubt that that carriage was Harper's; and Fitzgerald was sure it was that which they had met on the Naples road.

This evidence was deemed sufficient to determine their course, and they decided on instantly setting out in pursuit of Mr. Harper. Fitzgerald was anxious to accompany Dacre, in hopes of recovering the money which he had lately won from Harper at play. He had been drawn in first at Crofton's house to gamble — had lost considerably — but had recently won back again from Harper a part of that sum; and he feared that it was to avoid the repayment of himself and others, that Harper had taken this sudden flight. Having once determined on pursuit, no time was lost; Fitzgerald and Dacre separated — the passports were procured — the

horses ordered — the carriage prepared, and in an inconceivably short time from that in which Harper had been met, Fitzgerald and Dacre might have been seen galloping at a still greater rate on the very same road.

On they went, with all the speed which command, entreaty, bribery could effect. At each post-house they enquired what time had elapsed since the carriage had passed, which they supposed was conveying Harper. For the first two stages they seemed hardly to gain upon him; at the third the time was shortened between the arrival of the pursued and the pursuers; and they began to hope his speed might have relaxed as he got further from Rome.

They had now reached the Pontine Marshes. The moon was up, and its pale and sickly light came well in harmony with the plain of death they traversed. Herds of buffaloes and horses

occasionally broke the low unvaried line of the horizon, whilst the shadows cast from the trees on the side of the road marked the straight line of their route. By daylight, it is here a saddening sight to see the earth decked out in all the brightness of its freshest verdure—to see the cattle grazing, and the horses, scarcely tamed by man, exert their speed in playful wildness. We think that scenes like these should tell of peace and plenty to the man who treads the soil; but we look around, and see disease has preyed on every form; and on every cheek seems set the pale cadaverous stamp of sure decay. We behold man, to whom all things were given for his use, thus droop and die where other creatures live, and vegetation thrives. Here are the condemned of prisons sent to delay the doom their guilt has sealed. It is fearful to watch the work of justice wrought by this

slow-consuming poison ; and still more shocking to gaze upon the mark of crime that sits with death upon the convict's face, reminding us, each moment, of the life that has unfitted him to die. But night drops a veil over sights like these ; and onward the travellers dashed, with a speed that seemed to dare the swift arrow of the destroying angel. The horses' feet now scarcely touched the ground on which they passed, and in this excess of activity and life the thoughts of death and weakness were forgotten.

The increased rapidity of motion gave new hopes of success to their chase ; and Dacre and his companion felt their spirits rise at each step that brought them nearer to the object of pursuit. Neither had formed any definite notion of the plan to be adopted, should they succeed in overtaking the carriage, and should Harper prove the fugitive. On that point it had indeed

occurred to Dacre, more than once in the beginning of their journey, that they had by no means conclusive evidence; but now, in the heat of eager pursuit, all was forgotten, saving the immediate object of reaching the carriage. They followed; and they continued to ask, with breathless eagerness, at each post, how long it had preceded them. One hour only was it in advance; and each horse seemed gifted with wings to do its master's bidding.

Terracina would now be soon in sight; but they had no time to think of brigands or of escorts, or of all the fears expressed, and of all the cautions given, to those who venture on this road by night. They longed to hear again how much was gained upon the traveller's flight, and they watched with interest for the first glimpse of the place where fresh intelligence would be gained.

Terracina was in sight. The moon just tipped with light the straggling dwellings of the ancient town, that crowns the hill above, whilst the bright red glare of torches brought to view the houses of the street below. A crowd of people was distinctly seen. There were men on horseback, and their shining heads and breasts, which gleamed in the light, bespoke at once the helmet and cuirass of soldiers. "What could it mean?" Their thoughts were onward bent. They trembled lest any disturbance in the town should delay their progress.

A few minutes now brought them to the inn; but their arrival had increased the bustle, and for a while it seemed hopeless to obtain any distinct account of the commotion in the town, and this assembling of troops. "Briganti" and "soldati" were the words most often heard, and at length they made out, that information

had been just received of an intended attack upon the carriages of a Russian prince and suite, expected that night from Naples. The troops had been summoned, in consequence, to guard the road between Terracina and Itri. The landlord strongly urged upon Dacre and Fitzgerald the danger of proceeding on their route, and the absolute necessity of their halt at his house ; but they were deaf to all remonstrances : their impatience to depart increased with the fear of delay.

They ascertained that the carriage they pursued had left the town but half an hour before their arrival, and that such had been the traveller's eagerness to proceed, that he refused to wait for the protection of the troop now setting off, and had taken only two soldiers by way of escort. This troop was now, however, in readiness. Dacre and Fitzgerald were not sorry

to avail themselves of the protection which the other gentleman had refused. At another time they might have been disposed rashly to dare the dangers of a rencontre with these heroes of the road and mountain ; but the fear of being stopped, and thus losing the object of pursuit, made them gladly accept the offer that might spare them that danger.

Again they found themselves in motion, and a thousand varied thoughts came crowding on their minds, as the sight of the guard kept alive the recollection of the danger that demanded their presence. Fitzgerald once declared "it would be rather good fun to have a bit of a fight." But Dacre was not inclined to talk—his mind was pre-occupied with things of the past and the future, too serious for his companion's sympathy ; and they journeyed on in silence, each following to himself the train of

thought which the scene and circumstances had called into action. A soldier rode on each side of the carriage, some of the troop before, the rest behind ; and though the stillness of the air and the quiet of night gave distinctness to every sound, to these sounds their ear became accustomed, and they began to be lulled into the false security which even a brief impunity will give.

Another moment, and that security was shaken. A distant shot was heard, and they both started up to see if that shot had been heard by others, and to listen for its repetition. It was repeated. The word of command was loudly given to the guard, and forward they galloped with a speed which bore them soon from out of sight or hearing of the carriage. Two only were left for protection to the travellers ; and had it not been for their presence, neither threats nor entreaty would have induced

the postilion to advance. Nothing, however, could persuade him to continue at the rapid pace at which, till now, he had gone. He dreaded the possible attack of the brigands, and hoped, by delay, to give time to the soldiers to disperse the assailants before he reached the spot where first the shots were heard.

It is hard for the bravest to endure suspense; and this lengthened uncertainty, not only of what might befall themselves, but of what might have already been the fate of others, pressed with appalling force upon their minds, and made their situation insupportable. Was it possible that these shots were directed against the carriage which they believed to contain Harper? or had he escaped, and some other been attacked—perchance the prey for which the robbers lay in ambush? Had that one short sound dealt death and desolation to the home of affec-

tion and peace? Had any fallen, on whom others clung with all the fond dependence of helplessness and love? Who could tell to what misery that sound had given birth? and the sad visions of domestic grief were quickly summoned into fancy's view.

CHAP. XVII.

A death bed 's a detector of the heart ;
Here tired Dissimulation drops her mask,
Through life's grimace, that mistress of the scene !
Here real and apparent are the same.

YOUNG.

MORE than sufficient time had elapsed for the troop to have reached the spot where first the shot was heard, and the sound of other shots now fell distinctly on the ear. They seemed scarcely nearer than the two which first roused their attention : but the direction was changed ; for the noise was considerably to the left of the road, and it seemed, therefore, probable that the soldiers must have pursued the robbers, with whom they were now engaged. The postilion,

no longer alarmed for his own safety, yielded at length to the bribes and threats held out to induce him to increase his pace, and galloped rapidly on. A few minutes more, they thought, must now bring them to the spot where the attack had commenced ; and they strained their eyes, to look for any object which might serve to tell them aught of the catastrophe that had occurred. Another moment—and both exclaimed at once, “ A carriage ! ”

A carriage stood in the road ; the horses were taken off, and it was guarded by four soldiers. Dacre and Fitzgerald sprang from their seats to obtain a better view. They stopped : Fitzgerald recognised the carriage to be that which they pursued ; and in breathless haste they asked one of the soldiers what had become of its owner.

“ E morto,” was the reply.

“Dead !” repeated Dacre, as he turned to Fitzgerald with a look of horror.

“Where had he been carried ?” asked Fitzgerald. The man pointed to a house near the road.

“Let us go there instantly,” said Dacre, “he may not be really dead :” so saying, he jumped from his carriage, followed by Fitzgerald ; and guided by the light which glimmered in the window, they quickly made their way to the cottage.

The first glance satisfied them as to the identity of the person they sought. Stretched on a table, in death-like stillness, Harper lay extended. They thought he was dead, but life was not extinct : he had been wounded in the back, and the wound, imperfectly bound, still bled. Dacre stanchd the blood, and applied such remedies as the place afforded, to restore the

fainting man to consciousness and life. He opened his eyes, and looked on Dacre and Fitzgerald, but did not seem to recognise them. They feared his sense was gone, though the frame still lived ; and again for a while he sank. He soon became restless, and turned from side to side, as though in pain.

“ Hold him, Dacre,” said Fitzgerald, fearing he would fall from the table.

“ Dacre !” exclaimed Harper, who heard the name, and started up with a wild and feverish expression, that made their blood recoil.

“ I am here,” replied Dacre, taking his hand. “ I fear you are much hurt, Mr. Harper : you are wounded, and I am come to assist you.”

“ You are wounded, and I am come to assist you,” muttered Harper, and again and again he repeated that sentence, as if unconscious of its meaning. His fever now rapidly

increased, for the wound had begun to inflame; and his talking, which was incessant, was never coherent, and not always articulate. At length some sudden fancy seemed to strike his mind, and he exclaimed, "I will tell all."

"Mark well his words," whispered Dacre to Fitzgerald: "they may be of importance to me."

"You shall repent, sir, you shall repent," continued Harper: "no, no, Sarah — give me that picture." His words ran into each other, and for a time they could distinguish nothing further. "Where is my letter-case?" enquired Harper, with some vehemence, but more coherently.

"Probably in your carriage," replied Fitzgerald, "unless the brigands have taken it."

"No, no, the villains have not taken that. Go, sir — go, I entreat you," continued he with

great excitement, "I must know that my letter-case is safe." Fitzgerald left the room. Dacre had sent to Terracina for a surgeon, and the man now entered; he examined the wound: the paroxysm of pain had a little subsided, and Harper understood that it was by a medical man he was attended. "Am I to live or die? tell the truth," said he, in Italian to the surgeon. The surgeon told him at once that the ball had not lodged, but that the injury was so severe that he could not survive many hours. Harper buried his face in his hands; he said nothing, but the answer had evidently been a severe, perhaps unexpected, shock to his mind.

Dacre approached him. "Mr. Harper," said he, "if you have any wishes that I can fulfil, I will promise to perform them."

Harper seemed moved at the offer, and, in a

voice of some emotion, said, "I deserve nothing from you."

"You may have injured me," replied Dacre; "but under existing circumstances, those injuries ought to be, and are, forgiven."

"Where is my letter-case?" said Harper, again groaning in pain. "I will not die the rascal I have lived — give it to me — give it to me," said he, and he writhed in seeming agony of mind and body. Fitzgerald returned: the letter-case could not be found; the brigands who had quickly routed the poor escort of two soldiers, made booty of all they could find before the troop had arrived, and it was supposed the case must have fallen into their hands. "It must be found — look again — look again," exclaimed Harper; "I cannot endure this," said he, in a voice of anguish, and his face was

convulsed with pain and agitation. Fitzgerald again left the room.

“Mr. Harper,” said Dacre, in a whisper, as he approached the dying man, “if you have any thing on your mind that you would wish to impart, I entreat of you not to delay; you know the worst — consider your awful situation.”

“Did Crofton ever speak of me?” said he. Dacre said he had. “Did he uphold my character to you?” continued he, fixing his eyes upon Dacre as he spoke.

“To you it must best be known the manner in which Crofton was likely to speak of you; it cannot now be material to know to whom his opinion was expressed.” Harper made no reply: there seemed a struggle in his mind, but he was silent; till suddenly recollecting it was strange that Dacre should be with him, he said —

“What brought you here, Mr. Dacre?”

“I came,” said Dacre, “in pursuit of you. I came to speak to you of the terms, on which you proposed to resign into my hands the picture of my father. I found you had left Rome, and I pursued you: if there is any thing connected with that picture of which you have the knowledge, tell me, I implore of you, ere it be too late.”

“Where is the letter-case?”

“Fitzgerald still searches for it,” said Dacre; “but tell me how you came into possession of that picture: tell me if you are in possession of any secret that concerns me.”

“Crofton knows all,” replied Harper: and Dacre feared his mind was about to wander again. Again he repeated the question.

“How came that picture into your possession?”

“I found it in your father’s desk,” replied Harper.

“ Did you know my father ? ”

“ I lived with him.”

“ When ? ”

“ When he died.”

“ Are you acquainted with any secret of his ? ”

“ You shall know all,” said he ; “ but why don’t he come ? where is it ? give me the case.”

Dacre tried to calm his excitement ; but his limbs were convulsed, and it was some time before he could speak again.

“ Is any one in your confidence ? ” enquired Dacre.

“ Crofton knows all,” he repeated. “ I have wronged you, but it was his fault.”

Dacre would not believe that Crofton could have injured him.

“ Mr. Harper, all wrongs from you are now forgiven ; but beware at this awful moment of what you say of others, that cannot be recalled.”

Harper did not seem to heed this appeal. "You will find it in the case," said he, in a feebler voice.

"What shall I find?" asked Dacre.

"The secret."

"The case cannot be found," rejoined Dacre; "tell me," said he, with encreasing eagerness, "what that secret is — Oh, do not delay." Harper made an effort — he slightly raised himself — turned towards Dacre — looked at him a moment —

"You will find" — said he: he paused: — his head drooped upon his chest. Dacre supported him: his frame was stiffened by the last convulsive struggle, and a dreadful groan escaped his lips, as he expired.

Dacre gazed for a moment on the corpse that lay before him: death had relaxed the hard features of the wretched man, and the agonised

expression was now changed for one of peace and repose. Where was the soul which had harboured dark thoughts? Where was the consciousness that had brought remorse for their existence? All that had animated—all that had disfigured—the form that lay stretched before him, was now fled; and it was a relief to gaze upon the still unmeaning look which death had fixed upon that face.

When death has stamped repose on some loved countenance, whose life has seemed a guide to higher bliss—when death can sit, but as the sleep of innocence and rest—when death can seem the haven where the pure and gentle spirit sought protection from the storms of life—we are not shocked to see that change: tears of grief are shed; but we grieve for ourselves, not for them. The calmness of death seems befitting their life; and we dare, with humble

hope, to think they have not lived in vain. But, oh ! how different when the transformation is from passion to that changeless calm : we see that rest is given to the image on which guilt had traced its restless track ; we see that all that is dark is fled ; we know that all which of that being is now fair, must perish — all which was dark, is eternal. We shudder at the thought, and feel that, in mercy to ourselves, will we obey the heavenly precept, “ to judge not, that we be not judged ? ”

CHAP. XVIII.

Know'st thou not,
 That when the searching eye of Heaven is hid
 Behind the globe, and lights the lower world —
 Then thieves and robbers range abroad unseen,
 In murders and in outrage bloody here?
 But when, from under the terrestrial ball,
 He fires the proud tops of the eastern pines,
 And darts his light through every guilty hole,
 Then murders, treasons, and detested sins,
 The cloak of night being pluck'd from off their backs,
 Stand bare and naked, trembling at themselves!

King Richard II.

DACRE looked in sorrow, not in anger, on the remains of him who had injured him in life, whose very death had seemed to wrong him of the atonement he would have made. But the broken confession gave at least a clue to the object he must endeavour to attain. The letter-case must be now his goal: once possessed of that, he hoped the secret which Harper, with

his dying breath, had striven to tell might be discovered; and he quitted the cottage, to see if Fitzgerald had been more successful in his second search — but Fitzgerald was gone.

Dacre had said when Harper was raving, “Mark well his words, they may be of importance to me.” He thought the letter-case might be of importance to Dacre; and having satisfied himself that it was nowhere in the carriage, he had mounted the postilion’s horse, and galloped off in the direction in which the brigands and soldiers had gone before, determined to track their route, and recover, if possible, the possession of the object in question. He had left a pencil note to this effect for Dacre, with one of the soldiers, adding, that he had better return to Rome immediately, and give notice of all that had happened; and that he would follow so soon as his pursuit was over.

Dacre determined to abide by this advice, and he also determined upon conveying back the body to Rome, where it might be interred in the English burying-ground. The corpse was replaced in that carriage where but a few hours before it had journeyed on so rapidly—so full of all the busy tide of thought—so urged by all the passions that animate and mislead mankind. Dacre found, on his arrival at Rome, that Fitzgerald was not yet returned, and he began to be alarmed, lest in his anxiety to render him a service, any disaster should have befallen him in the pursuit.

The following day relieved him from his anxiety. Fitzgerald returned. He had succeeded in tracking the soldiers, on their return from the attack on the brigands, who had retired to the mountains. Two had been made prisoners by the soldiers, and they had also suc-

ceeded in recovering the lost booty; but no letter case was to be found: it must either have been lost on the way, or never been taken with the other things. The prisoners were examined on the subject, and both declared that no such thing had been seen by them, though to their care had been entrusted the stolen contents of the carriage.

Dacre requested Fitzgerald would be silent as to his anxiety concerning this letter-case. He was desirous that nothing should transpire on the subject till he had written himself to Crofton. He had hoped to be acquainted with the secret contained in the lost case, before he imparted to him the circumstances attending the death of Harper. Harper had, in truth, shaken his confidence in the friendship of Crofton; and he hoped it might be either restored, or utterly broken by the discovery of this secret.

The doubt was more distressing than the worst reality. Harper was buried according to the rites of the English Church, and Dacre and Fitzgerald followed him to the grave ; and buried with the senseless corpse all enmity for the wrongs they had received at his hands—for wrongs they had both received, though widely different in degree and kind.

Further delay now seemed useless ; and Dacre determined to transmit to Crofton the “plain unvarnished tale” of all that had occurred—of the contents of Harry Molesworth’s letter—of Mrs. Shepherd’s statement—of his interview with Harper the following morning—of Harper’s immediate flight—his broken confession, and subsequent death.

It was with this intention that he had set himself down to write when his servant entered to inform him, that on the return of Mr. Har-

per's carriage from the funeral, an accident had occurred. Another vehicle had run against it—and it was so much damaged that it had been with difficulty corded up sufficiently to be brought back to the place where it stood. The person to whose care it was confided had sent to request Dacre would look at it immediately, lest any blame should be imputed to him for the injuries it had sustained.

Dacre accompanied his servant to the *remise*. Whilst examining the effects of the accident, a small projection at the bottom of the carriage attracted Dacre's attention. It struck him as unusual, and he speculated on its probable utility. He opened the carriage-door, and tried to ascertain within for what use it was intended. He removed the carpet on the floor which was fastened down with a long brass pin. On lifting it up, a piece of oil-cloth, painted like wood,

was to be seen : that also he raised ; and then a lock and a little door were discovered. Round Harper's neck had been found a chain and keys. Dacre possessed those keys. He instantly returned to his house—fetched them—and applied one after another to the lock, but in vain. At last he came to one that entered easily. He turned it—the door opened—and within the well was discovered—the lost letter-case !

Dacre hurried back to his house with a feverish impatience to possess himself of the secret which Harper had confessed would be found in that case. He forbade all visitors, rushed to his room, locked the door, and in a few minutes more he held in his hand the packet which contained all that was wanting to convince him of the treachery and villainy of Harper, if not of Crofton.

The miniature of his father, which had served

to deceive poor Mr. Wakefield, was there; a small and ill-executed likeness of a young woman, with dark eyes and complexion, was also there: and at the back were written the initials, I. D. Dacre could not doubt it was the portrait of his mother. A letter directed to Lord Hexham, the seal of which was broken, next attracted his attention. He opened it. The letter was from Major Dacre to his brother, written on his journey homewards, when the state of his health had warned him to write what he might not live to tell.

It contained a full account of his first acquaintance with Isabella — of the growth and progress of their attachment — and of their marriage, which had taken place immediately on her arrival at the place to which she had followed him. Whatever reproach she might have merited for her youthful imprudence, in having thus aban-

doned her home for his sake, he was determined that no other should she deserve, and that her spotless innocence should never be tarnished by any ungenerous advantage being taken of this step. His own love, though tempered by the consideration of those difficulties with which superior age and experience had made him acquainted, had been scarcely less ardent than her own; and he knew that, by the display and avowal of attachment on his part, he had sanctioned its indulgence on hers. His conduct was determined at once; and their clandestine marriage was instantly solemnised in presence of two confidential witnesses. One was the friend who had been killed soon afterwards in battle; the other was the servant of that friend: his name was not mentioned in the letter, and Dacre looked eagerly to see if in any other paper that name was mentioned,

To the envelope of the letter was carefully sealed a piece of paper. He opened it: it was the certificate of the marriage, signed by the clergyman, by Major Dacre's friend, Captain Hallett, and by Captain Hallett's foreign servant. Dacre knew, from Lord Hexham's researches, that the clergyman was dead, but this servant might be alive; and should any living witness be required, his presence might be of consequence; and Dacre determined to find him, if possible. There were also other letters and papers—some letters of Lord Hexham's to his brother, and a few from Isabella to her husband, when separated from him. One of these was written on the birthday of their child, beginning thus: "Our little Francis is a year old this day," &c. The date of the month, and the year, and the place, was given.

Dacre sat and gazed in speechless, breathless

wonder at this strange mass of evidence to prove his right to wealth and honour. Harper's dying words, "Crofton knows all," rang discordantly on his ear. What did Crofton know? Did Crofton know that all he saw before him now was true? or did Crofton know that, notwithstanding all this apparent certainty, some flaw existed in the marriage contract, which would render null these seeming proofs of his legitimacy? His mind revolted at the belief that Crofton would have conspired to defraud him of his rights. He had so often spoken of the pain it gave him to possess what Dacre should have had. He had shown so much interest—so much friendship towards him: he would not at once believe him guilty of such base deceit—such sordid treachery. He resolved to write to him, to state all that had passed—all he had found; and by Crofton's answer he could better

judge, than now, the nature and extent of his participation in this act. Till he received that answer, he determined that to none would he impart the discovery of the letter-case, or the nature of its contents.

Crofton received the letter. He knew well that the servant who had lived in Captain Hallett's service was still alive; and that, once possessed of his name, it would be an easy task for Dacre to discover him, and procure his testimony. The man was a foreigner, and had been totally ignorant of the inquiries instituted by Lord Hexham into the evidence of his brother's marriage, or he might then have come forward. For some years past, he had been in Harper's pay to be silent. Under these circumstances, Crofton knew that it would be useless to practise any further deception; and as expediency was his rule of conduct, he did not attempt

deceit which he knew would be detected. But expediency had been Crofton's only rule of conduct. He was one who had long mocked with scorn the principles he would not follow, and successfully repelled the conscience which something of a better nature had still left to smite him with remorse. He ridiculed the idea of repentance and reformation as youthful chimeras—he had laughed at virtue till he believed it ridiculous; and he sought, in a careless manner and a playful wit, to arm himself against reflection, and protect himself from censure.

CHAP. XIX.

Il est plus honteux de se défier de ses amis que d'en être
trompé. ROCHEFOUCAULT.

DACRE expected, with impatience, Crofton's reply to his letter; and it came without loss of time. Dacre trembled to open it, for a thousand fears had crossed his mind. He feared that Crofton might be able to prove that the information contained in Harper's case could not be substantiated; he feared to find the treachery confirmed he now suspected in the man who had professed himself his friend.

The letter began by the acknowledgment of Dacre's, and then came as follows : —

“No man can rejoice in this change in your prospects more than I do ; for if you had not recovered the possession of the property which accident assigned to me, the twelve tribes of Israel would have pitched their tents in Hexham Park. It amuses me beyond measure to think of the amount of money-lending disappointments ; and I shall now have the satisfaction of seeing you where I could not, and where my creditors would, have been : so pray don't let any consideration for me mar the pleasure of finding yourself Lord Hexham, with a large unencumbered property. You ask me to what motive I ascribe this desire in Harper to injure you. One should suppose, by the question, that you believed the villain's assertion that I was in his confidence. I told you once how first I became acquainted with him : I took some pains then to discover who he was, and found

that he had begun life as a travelling servant or courier. Perhaps he may have acted in that capacity to your father, and probably did not come honestly by the documents in question, which would at once account for the secrecy he maintained on the subject. But enough of Harper and his rogueries. The brigands have done a righteous deed in ridding us of this low-born wretch; and the least you can do will be to obtain the pardon of all concerned, and to settle a handsome annuity on the man who fired the lucky shot. What shall you do? You must go to England, I suppose, to arrange this affair, establish your title, &c. If you return to the Continent, we shall meet, I dare say; for *nous autres* always do meet on the Continent, though never in England. I start for Sicily to-morrow with a friend: it is an old engagement, or I would have persuaded you to take a run down

to Naples, or have returned myself to Rome, before you start for the North, that I might see how your new honours sit upon you. I should have liked to talk over all these strange changes with you ; but I never was born to do what I like ; so write to me, *caro mio*. How I should like to see the flutter in the *casa* Ashby at hearing of this change of scenes and decorations ! I have a great mind to set off directly, to give them the benefit of my ‘excellent taste’ and ‘cultivated mind’ upon that bust. How I should like to see their embarrassment at not knowing how to get rid of me, now that I am at a discount ! Those people amuse me. *Addio*.

P. S. Should you find, among Harper’s papers, any relating to money transactions with me, please to return them to me, as I can best explain their meaning ; and, of course, should any such be found, you will not mention their contents, for

it is a bore to have one's private affairs delivered over as public food for gossip and slander."

Dacre closed the letter, and threw it on one side. His suspicions that Crofton had been privy to the concealment practised by Harper, had been lately strengthened, though not established; and there was nothing in the light tone of Crofton's letter that convinced him of his innocence—nothing that disposed him to discredit the declaration of the dying Harper, or the evidence of certain memorandums which he had found since writing to Crofton. Not only were some of these in Harper's, and others in Crofton's handwriting, concerning the payment of large sums; but also a letter of Crofton's, promising to increase a yearly stipend to Harper, was discovered in the letter-case. Dacre took copies of all these papers, and transmitted them without comment to Crofton. But what-

ever were Dacre's suspicions, they did not then amount to proof; and though he now no longer concealed from others all he had discovered respecting himself, to none did he give a hint of his belief in Crofton's participation of guilt.

Dacre's suspicions were indeed most just, and in time he knew they were so. Mrs. Shepherd had been irritated by Harper refusing to repay the money she had procured for him from Mr. Wakefield; and in hopes of obtaining from the Molesworths the full amount of her late master's legacy, she had consented to make a still further confession of the schemes of Harper and herself. This confession was transmitted by Harry to Dacre, and, with the corroborative testimony of Harper's papers, the mystery was now unravelled, that had so long perplexed him, and in which his own fate had been so deeply concerned.

It was quite true that Harper had lived with Major Dacre, in the capacity described by Crofton : and Crofton knew that he had done so. It was also true that Harper had not come honestly by the documents he had possessed. The languid state of Major Dacre's health had induced him to allow Harper occasional access, in his presence, to the desk in which his money was kept. Harper knew that it contained a considerable sum, and also some trinkets of value. Major Dacre died — Lord Hexham knew nothing of his brother's effects. The opportunity was tempting. Harper placed a sufficient sum in a portfolio, to avoid the danger of suspicion ; and then possessing himself of the more valuable desk, he made good his escape, under pretext of seeking if more of Major Dacre's property was to be found or whether it had been taken by the enemy. He wrote to

Lord Hexham a true and detailed account of the capture of the baggage belonging to some of Major Dacre's regiment. Lord Hexham was well satisfied with his statement, and never bestowed another thought on the man who had thus possessed himself of the knowledge he so diligently sought elsewhere.

Harper had now grown comparatively rich ; and for a length of time he dwelt wherever he was most sure of not being recognised, and indulged in the pleasures of gaming, to which he had always been strongly addicted. The documents which so deeply concerned Dacre remained in his hands. Their possession had formed no part of his scheme in taking away the desk in which they had been placed ; for it was not till after some little time that he even discovered their existence. But he could not restore them without exciting suspicion of the

manner in which they had been obtained ; and he was unwilling to destroy them, lest any opportunity should offer of turning into matter of profit their restoration to the family.

In time he returned to England, where his sister was residing as housekeeper to Mr. Wakefield. Her character for honesty having been somewhat tarnished, she had changed her name to that of Shepherd. It was Harper's idea to impose upon Mr. Wakefield the tale of Lieutenant Harrison's existence and death ; for he hoped that, when once his sister's grade in life was raised, the weak old man might be induced to share his wealth with her as his wife. The portraits of Major Dacre and Isabella had both been given into her care by Harper, and it occurred to her that the display of this miniature would strengthen Mr. Wakefield's belief in her story : and in that she was right ; though

so great was her power, that to have doubted her word would scarcely have entered his mind.

Harper became known as the frequenter of races and gaming-houses; and it was, as Crofton truly said, upon one of these occasions that their acquaintance commenced. Crofton lost a considerable sum to Harper: Harper insisted on payment. Crofton declared it had been unfairly won, and threatened to expose him if he persisted in his demand. Harper hinted at the possession of a secret that merited his attention; and after all the cautious preambles which men of their respective characters were sure to exercise previous to the conclusion of a compact, it ended in Crofton not only paying the sum he had lost to Harper, but entering into an agreement to pay him a considerable income, should Dacre not inherit on the death of Lord Hexham. Lord Hexham died—Harper possessed

the only proof extant of the legitimacy of Francis Dacre—and Crofton fulfilled his engagement.

It was to the accidental discovery, by Dacre, of the portrait of his father, that the Molesworths were indebted for the assistance of Mr. Wakefield. It was by Harper's advice that Mrs. Shepherd seemingly forwarded their wishes ; for he feared lest Dacre and the Molesworths should become suspicious of her power, and, if irritated against her, might seek either to displace her, or to prosecute enquiries respecting the picture which would be far from agreeable to himself. It has already been told how little Mrs. Shepherd had intended that Mr. Wakefield should fulfil his promise to his niece. Harper and his sister agreed that her having assumed Shepherd as her maiden name, made it expedient that they should now pass for cousins. It was to his house

that Mr. Wakefield went for change of air, just when Mrs. Shepherd wished to avoid the risk of his seeing more of Dacre than either she or Harper desired ; and it was then that she restored to her brother the miniature which had been given to her care ; and it was for him that, under pretence of a loan, she obtained money from Mr. Wakefield.

It appeared from the perusal of some of those papers of which Dacre had furnished Crofton with a copy, that since the time of Dacre's arrival at Rome, Harper had become more exacting in his demands ; and though no mention in writing was made of the grounds on which an advance was claimed, it seemed likely that it was in consequence of some threatened betrayal to Dacre ; and it now occurred to him, that the probable object of Harper's flight towards Naples might have been to see whether fresh terms, still

more advantageous to himself than those he had proposed to Dacre, could be exacted from Crofton, if allowed to remain in possession of the Hexham estate.

It was a sickening tissue of deceit and fraud that Dacre thus unravelled; but this was a time to act as well as think. Measures were successfully adopted to discover the only living witness of the marriage of his parents, and to secure his presence in England should his testimony be required. Dacre wrote to Harry Molesworth, to the Duke of Bolton, and to his lawyer, informing them of the proofs he now possessed of his legitimacy, and asking their advice on the steps that should be taken to establish the truth of the information he had obtained of his real position.

It need hardly be told how kindly Mrs. Ashby and her daughters rejoiced at this accession of

honour and wealth to their old friend Mr. Dacre; but still, in spite of all their friendly sympathy, Mrs. Ashby could scarcely conceal from herself the painful truth, that with neither Julia nor Cecilia was there the slightest appearance of increasing flirtation. It was very strange—very irritating—very disappointing—and she felt the more vexed, because it might have been all her own fault. Had she but sooner understood his tastes, and encouraged a greater intimacy with Cecilia than with Julia, her plan might have succeeded. Now she foresaw that he would return to England; and so much time had been lost in endeavouring to persuade him that her eldest daughter was just the person to suit him, that there would be none left to insure the success of the youngest. She trembled each day for the announcement of his departure, and could only hope that the affecting hour of part-

ing might work some good in the prospects of one or other of her daughters.

But poor Mrs. Ashby was here again doomed to disappointment. No leave-taking took place. Dacre suddenly determined to hasten to England. Fitzgerald was charged with the adieus he should have made in person to the Ashbys, and to others; and he quitted Rome with a heart bounding anew with love and hope, to fly to her, from whom his heart—nay, his very thoughts, had never for a moment strayed.

CHAP. XX.

Oh ! many a shaft at random sent,
Finds mark the archer little meant ;
And many a word at random spoken,
May soothe or wound a heart that 's broken.

WALTER SCOTT.

THE Duke of Bolton was far away from London at the time when Dacre's letter had arrived, and it was some time before it reached him. The Molesworths, having determined not to await Dacre's reply to their offer of joining him on the Continent, had left England on their way to Italy when his letter to Harry arrived. It was therefore only from the lawyer that he received an answer to his questions of what steps should be taken to establish his rights.

The lawyer strongly recommended his immediate return to England. Dacre shuddered at the thoughts of returning where Emily dwelt, to be within daily, perhaps hourly, reach of her, and yet not to see her; or to see her, and to endure the altered mien, the averted glance, of her who had once confessed the love he must never hope to win again, was a trial that he dreaded. He thought it more than he could bear, and he almost regretted the very circumstance which now seemed to impose as a duty his return to England.

Another letter lay upon his table, still unopened : the hand had not attracted his attention : he had thrown it aside whilst taking up that of the lawyer, and others ; and, lost in thought after reading their contents, he forgot for a while this neglected epistle. On opening it, he found, to his surprise, that it was from Sir Edward

Bradford. He had never before received a letter from him, and its possible object filled his mind with alarm. He quickly read it; his face glowed — his eyes kindled — a tremor of agitation ran through his frame — the letter fell to the ground — he clasped his hands together, and in a tone of fervent gratitude exclaimed, “Thank God! then she may yet be mine.”

The purport of Sir Edward’s letter was, indeed, most friendly. He confessed that Dacre’s declaration that Lady Emily was still free, had emboldened him to seek her affection: he told him how his hopes had been checked upon his first attempt to declare his feelings towards her, but that, encouraged by the friendliness of Lady Kendal, and deceived by his own wishes, he had explained himself more fully to Lady Emily in London, and that the result had been a death-blow to his hopes. He had told Lady Emily, that

unless her heart was engaged to another, he would still hope that perseverance might win her consent; but she had felt in honour bound to discourage the false hopes to which her silence would have given rise. She had partly allowed that her heart was already bestowed; but this half confession had been made with such extreme agitation, and with the expression of feelings so melancholy, that it was impossible to doubt but that, from some unaccountable circumstance, she who seemed born to give happiness to others, had lost her own. He then told Dacre his reasons for believing that he was the object of her affections.

Dacre could not doubt that her love, at least, was still his. He had once thought in bitterness, that his birth might have influenced her decision; now he clung with hope to that idea. The change in his situation gained fresh value in

his eyes ; and before another day and night had passed, his journey homeward was commenced.

Numerous, various, and contradictory were the reports that reached England concerning the circumstances attending the death of Harper, and the altered position of Dacre. Some declared that a duel had been the result between him and Crofton, for that Crofton had been privy to the deceit of Harper : and others said that it was solely owing to Crofton's magnanimity that a confession was wrung from Harper ; and that Dacre had, in return for his kindness, generously shared with him the Hexham estate. The only point on which the truth seemed known, was, that Dacre had obtained proofs of his legitimacy, and that measures were about to be taken to establish his claim to the title.

Lady Kendal and Emily were in London

when the news of this event arrived; but as Lady Kendal never went into company, and Emily but seldom, it had been a topic of conversation for two or three days before it reached their knowledge. For a time, Emily had entirely declined mixing in society, but she saw that Lady Kendal wished her to do so : she saw it gave her pain, to witness this perseverance in a change of habits as well as spirits; and, to comply with her wishes, she occasionally consented to mingle in scenes which afforded her no other pleasure than that of making a sacrifice of her own feelings to those of her mother.

A concert was to be given at the house of a friend. Emily's taste for music had outlived the many others she had lost; and she always preferred going where she could be least called upon to take part in conversation. Accordingly

it was arranged that Emily should go, under the *chaperonage* of a near relation, to whose care, Lady Kendal always confided her upon such occasions; and to the concert they went.

Emily had not long been there, when Mr. Maitland accosted her.

“I am glad to see you out again, Lady Emily,” said he; “I wish it was not so rarely that we were allowed to catch a glimpse of you, now, in the world.”

Emily was annoyed at this remark on a change which had been produced by circumstances so painful, and she made but little reply. Mr. Maitland tried one or two other topics; then remembering the news of the day, he said —

“I suppose you have heard all this marvelous story of a Mr. Harper, and my old friend Crofton, and Dacre. You remember Dacre,

don't you?" continued he; and he looked at her as he spoke.

Mr. Maitland had never been able to make out whether that flirtation between Dacre and Lady Emily had meant, as he said, any thing or nothing; and he thought the present a good opportunity to see if she changed countenance at the mention of all that had happened.

"You remember Dacre, don't you?" What a question to be asked! What a question to be answered! by her on whose heart his image was so deeply engraven. The inquisitive look and tone in which Mr. Maitland had thus dared to touch upon the chord which vibrated through every nerve—the thought that he would pry into the feeling she preserved in sacred secrecy—gave her spirit to reply. She was offended, and it gave her strength to say, with seeming calmness, that she did remember him, and that

she knew nothing of the story to which he alluded.

Mr. Maitland was delighted to find some one to whom he could retail the story he had almost feared was by this time known to all.

“Where have you been, Lady Emily?” said he: “why, all London has talked of nothing else for the last twenty-four hours. Dacre turns out, after all, to be Lord Hexham:” and he then proceeded to give her what he thought the most authentic version of this strange tale.

But Emily heard but little of it: she had heard enough to know that her engagement need never have been broken—to remember it could never be renewed—and to know that happiness was now gone, without the supporting comfort that a daughter’s duty had been done. She commanded herself till Mr. Maitland moved on to speak to another; then complaining of

the heat of the room, she begged her chaperon would allow her to go home. The carriage was called ; but it was early in the evening, and she persuaded the lady, therefore, to return to the concert-room, whilst she went home alone. She accompanied Emily to the stairs, and then consented to return.

Emily said, "Home," and threw herself back in the carriage. The carriage arrived at Lady Kendal's. The door was opened—the steps were let down—but Lady Emily moved not. The footman said, "The door is open, my Lady," but no answer was returned. He looked in, to see if she had heard him ; but it was too late : Emily could neither hear nor see. He called the porter who had opened the house door : they lifted her from the carriage, and she was carried senseless to her room.

CHAP. XXI.

To wilful men,
The injuries that they themselves procure,
Must be their schoolmaster.

King Lear.

Poor wounded heart !
Poor wounded heart, farewell !
Thy hour is come,
Thy hour of rest is come ;
Thou soon wilt reach thy home,
Poor wounded heart, farewell !
The pain thou'lt feel in breaking,
Less bitter far will be
Than that long deadly course of aching,
This life has been to thee.

MOORE.

DACRE journeyed rapidly on. A ray of hope had penetrated the deep gloom which had so long enveloped his prospects, and it gave an impetus to his movements. He fondly thought

that Adversity had done her worst—he vainly hoped that he who had suffered so much, should suffer no more.

There is often a tendency to superstition when the feelings are strongly excited. We mistake our wishes for foreknowledge—we misconstrue our fears into presentiments. When we have seen the tide of orrow rise and swell,—when we have watched it reaching, in succession, every point to which we looked for happiness, and with its dark waters effacing or destroying all it meets, till nought is left before us but the dreary prospect of its troubled waves,—we know that it has reached its height, and we can gaze on its gloomy sameness with the calmness of despair: but now the overwhelming tide has ebbed again, we catch a glimpse of some lost joy—of some concealed hope; and fancy, which o'ersteps the bounds of truth, re-

stores at once the picture as it stood before. One object has sufficed to kindle sanguine thoughts—to recall the view we feared was lost for ever. We think that, as the waters of affliction came, so will they depart; but it cannot be—some trace of their existence they will surely leave behind—something we prized will have been changed, removed, destroyed; something will be missing in the gay landscape of unalloyed bliss, and sadness will succeed to the place where it stood. The horizon may be unclouded; the flood may retire, but it never can—it never will be forgotten.

Such visitations do not come in vain—they may wash away impurities, they may fertilise the soil on which they flowed; virtues may spring up where vice, in all its rankness, grew; they may have forced upon the mind unbidden thoughts—unwelcome truths. We know not

all they may have wrought; but some monument of power will be left, something indelible will remain to shake our trust in earthly joys.

Perhaps it was the lengthened depression which Dacre had endured, which made his heart so unusually rebound with the sanguine hope of brightened prospects. How willingly imagination lends itself to cheat our reason! Dacre thought on all the vexations, and disappointments, and sorrows to which he had been subjected since the day on which his uncle had first disclosed to him the secret of his birth; and he pleased himself by now tracing all to that cause. Reason might have reminded him that, before that period, his youth had guarded him from all but childish woes, but reason was silenced by the delusive pleasure of believing that his sufferings had sprung only from a cause which had now ceased to exist. Vain hope! We think

only of the miseries that fate has awarded: we bury those in oblivion which we create for ourselves.

Dacre had gone through so much excitement and fatigue of late, that his progress was at length arrested by illness; and for two or three days he was delayed at Milan, and his journey was performed less rapidly from thence to Geneva. At Geneva he determined to rest two days, and then proceed, without again stopping, to England.

It was late in the afternoon when Dacre was sitting at the window of the inn at Secheron, and looking with admiration on the scene of grandeur and repose that was before him. The reflected mountain now seemed as though it strove to fathom the deep lake below: and on its placid surface lay the lengthened shadows of declining day. There was stillness in the air—

stillness that could be felt; and the flight and chirp of birds, the buz of the fly, and the hum of the bee, came distinctly on the ear. It was a stillness which the sound of voices, of the distant bell, the joyous whistle, and the merry laugh, served rather to mark than to destroy. At another time Dacre would have feared it was the stillness which heralds the approaching thunder-cloud; but now he dwelt on it as the type of peaceful noiseless joys.

A distant splash of oars was heard, and Dacre unconsciously watched the gradual nearing of that pleasing sound. At length the boat appeared in sight; and now the voices of the boatmen calling to those who awaited them on shore, proclaimed the intention of the passengers to land at the inn. Dacre watched their movements, and then the beauty of the lake tempted him to quit his window, and saunter to

the place where the passengers had landed, to see if any boat was to be hired ; but none was to be found, and, after a short stroll, he returned to his room.

On re-entering it he was startled at finding a large letter upon his table. The cover was directed in Fitzgerald's hand, and in the envelope was written as follows : —

“ The enclosed arrived but two days after your departure. The bearer, who is a friend of mine, is returning to England by the route you proposed, and, as he is in haste, will probably overtake you. Should he not do so before he reaches Geneva, he is to forward the packet from thence to England, according to the direction you left with me.”

Dacre did not stop to look at the direction of the enclosure. It was a thick letter, sealed with black ; and, as he opened it, another letter fell

on the floor. He picked it up, and was startled by the sight of his own handwriting. An instant more, and the blood rushed to his face; his head swam, and he could scarcely breathe. Ere a line was read, he saw that the letter he held was from Emily Somers; and he could scarcely compose himself sufficiently to read a word on which he thought his fate would depend.

The letter was as follows : —

“Once more have I determined to write to you. All will be over ere you can receive this letter, and the time will then be come for you no longer to remain in ignorance of the motives by which my conduct has been actuated. If, when you know all, you still think me wrong, forgive me, dearest Francis! If you think me justified, let the memory of our mutual love be held in sacred peace within your heart. Let it

not disturb the happiness of your future life ; let it not cast a gloom over the prospects that may still lie before you ; but let it be cherished as a blessed relic of the past.

“ I return you the last letter I shall probably ever receive from you. I would I had never received it ! but it must now be answered. Your conjecture *is* right. The unfortunate circumstance attending your birth is the cause of all the misery I have endured — of what is worse, of all I have inflicted ; but it was not kind of you to suppose that such a sacrifice would have been made, had it not been demanded by the most imperious duty. You think that I have given you up for some imaginary principle of right ; and you think, that had I loved you as I am beloved, I would not thus have abandoned you. You thought that my dear father, having died in ignorance

of our love, could not have imposed this sad duty on his child. I enclose you the letter that was found with his will.

“ Could I have acted otherwise than I did? I thought I ought not, and I feared to tell any but my mother of the cause that determined my conduct, lest they should differ in opinion, and that my wishes should yield what conviction refused. Yes, dearest ! I was silent ; for I feared my own weakness. It was hard to struggle with myself : had another struggled against me, I might have fallen — fallen from what I deemed the only path of duty. If I have erred in judgment, may the deep misery I have suffered be accepted as my atonement.

“ Your last letter cost me bitter tears — tears of hopeless sorrow. Yet, how can I wonder at the feelings you express ! condemned unheard, you had a right to conjecture, you had a right

to blame. Perhaps I acted too much to the letter, too little in the spirit, of my father's wishes. Caroline has now seen his letter ; and, to her mind it appeared clear, that, though respect for a parent's opinion might have justified the breaking off our engagement, the knowledge of his affectionate wish for my welfare would have justified its renewal, when neither time nor effort had succeeded in restoring to my heart the happiness he wished me to enjoy. But it is too late : your letter forbids even now the wish to be convinced by such arguments as these.

“ With what anguish of mind have I turned to that passage of your letter, which confirmed the sentence I had passed upon myself. You say, ‘ If my conjecture is right do not reply. Your silence will tell me that I am despised for what I cannot alter. Your silence will tell me

that, though my heart should break under the trial, I ought not to become your husband, if rejected for such a cause. No, Emily ! even could fate now change her cruel decree, — could she at this instant remove the stigma of illegitimacy — I ought not to claim the love of a wife in her who has despised me.’

“Dearest Francis, I thought the cup of bitterness was filled ; but it was reading this that made it overflow : and yet, how can I wonder that such should have been your feelings ! Perhaps I deserved you should thus think of me. Truth compelled my silence : for your conjecture was right, that it was owing to the unhappy circumstances of your birth that our engagement was broken ; and my silence must have confirmed you in the belief that I had entertained towards you thoughts that would have made me unworthy of your love. But I can-

not die, and let you live in error. Now you will understand all: your letter pained me; still I could well enter into the feelings by which it was dictated, but I could not bear it should be seen by others. They might not have felt as I felt towards you; and had they wronged you for the expressions it contained, it would have added to my grief. None but myself have seen it—none but ourselves know even of its existence. I have strongly on my mind the impression that my weary existence will soon end: I wish to live, at least so long as Heaven will spare my mother; but, should she survive me, comfort her in her desolation. She will be soothed by the kindness of one her child so dearly loved. Sorrow wears the health as well as spirits, and I have a presentiment that mine will be an early grave. But you will not then blame me; you will pity me when death has

closed the trials of my life. When you read this, you will know that, though my heart was broken, that my love was unshaken, undiminished. My latest prayer will be for you.

“ I have an unwillingness to bring this letter to a close ; for it is the last communion I can hold with you on earth. But still, that word ‘ farewell ’ must come. May Heaven forgive the sin of having loved so dearly one of mortal birth ! I fear it may have been too like idolatry. But this is weakness. I have said all that I would have you know — still I linger. It is another parting when I say farewell ; and yet I know that when you read that word, my heart will feel no sympathy with the sorrow I have caused — I know that the hand which now quivers with the emotion of grief will no longer tremble for you. This letter can only reach you when I am no more. It will be the messenger of death ; but it

will tell you that I have rested from the trials and sorrows of life. Farewell ! God protect you, and support you under the blow it will inflict !”

“ Oh God ! she is dead !” exclaimed Dacre : “ I have murdered her !” said he, starting wildly forward ; and, as he fell to the ground, his agony was suspended for a while, by the loss of consciousness and power.

But again he awoke to life and misery — misery that seemed too deep for man’s endurance. Emily ! the fond — the bright — the beautiful — joyous Emily ! Emily, on whose dimpling cheek the gay smile of cheerful innocence had played ! whose fairy step had marked the elasticity of happiness and youth — Emily, the very type of all that would make life seem beautiful, was dead — she had become a cold, senseless corpse. The power of feeling and of motion

gone. Dacre thought on that dreadful day, when for a moment he had feared the reality he now mourned. So had she looked, perhaps, when death had robbed her image of the pure spirit which had illumined her face; and now her very image must have been swept from off the surface of the earth: she must be now the mute inhabitant of the narrow cell where decay will follow to the stroke of death — ay! the loveliest form in which the human soul was ever clad must now to dust return. There was despair and desolation in the thought. Her decease was not the ghastly tribute which disease too often pays to death: she had sunk beneath the weight of mental woe; and Dacre knew that he had added to the burthen which had bowed her to the earth.

Why do we lay up for ourselves the bitterest aggravation to all sorrow? Why do we ever

forget that no evil is so great, so irremediable, so incurable, as that which springs from self-reproach. Dacre thought he could have borne with resignation and fortitude even this tremendous blow, had he but been free from this added wretchedness. But he did not, and he could not, spare himself from the remorse to which the reperusal of his own letter had given rise.

The habitual fault of his character had prevailed in a moment of disappointment and grief. He had never checked that over-sensitiveness which had been the offspring of untoward circumstances, and it had gained the mastery over reason and justice when his mind was wrought upon by the despair of blighted hopes. Mortifications, sometimes real and more often imaginary, had disposed him to think of insult or contempt where none had been either felt or

intended, and to resent as truth the creation of his fancy.

In his never-ending speculations as to the cause of Emily's conduct, it occurred to him that his birth might in some way have influenced her decision. Perhaps she had remembered having heard her father express some slighting opinion of those who were situated similarly to himself; and had relied only upon his fondness to wave a prejudice that would mar her happiness. Perhaps that death had now hallowed even his prejudices in her mind, and that she shrank from an alliance which he would have despised. He thought she might have been encouraged by Lady Kendal in this cruel token of respect to the possible sentiments of her father; and that she herself would soon, if she did not already, share the opinions she so scrupulously followed and respected.

Thoughts like these pressed sorely on a point, on which his sensitiveness was so acutely alive: he worked himself up to think, that, if rejected on that account, he ought no longer to wish to shake her resolution; and, galled by the irritation of wounded feelings, and disappointed affection, he addressed to her, on the night before he left England, the letter that had been now returned to him. It was written under feelings of great excitement; and he was not aware, till he reperused it, how strongly it had been worded. Her silence had, it is true, confirmed him in the belief that his conjecture had been right; but he could not doubt, from the accounts he had received from Harry Molesworth, that her love towards him was unchanged. The feelings of irritation under which he had written had been quelled by his confidence in her unbounded love, and by the settled gloom

which hung upon his mind; and, ere circumstances had made him look with hope to the idea that he had been right in his surmise, he had forgotten that he had sealed the bar to any change in her, by the declaration contained in his letter.

Now the frightful truth rushed upon him. The faults that are not hourly watched, and held in check, will assail us in our weakness, when, overpowered by emotions that have shaken reason from its hold, we are at the mercy of the prevailing error of our minds. Dacre now saw that he had been unkind — nay worse, he had been unjust — and unjust to whom? to Emily! The pangs of self-reproach pierced him to the heart, and told him how sadly, how greatly, it is in the power of man to add to the afflictions which come from Heaven.

Dacre sat for hours in the fixed and tearless agony, which finds no vent for sorrow ; and the stupor which succeeds intensity of thought at length usurped the place of sleep. It was morning ; and the entrance of his servant, to awake him at the accustomed hour, startled him into the recollection that the night was past, and that he had not been in bed. The servant was alarmed at his appearance, and asked if he was ill. Dacre replied in the negative, and desired that every thing should be instantly prepared for the continuance of their journey. Emily had told him to comfort her mother in her desolation, and he blessed her for the injunction. It seemed as if something yet remained for him to do in life : yes, there was something to live for when a wish of her's had yet to be fulfilled ; and he would fly to that bereaved widow, who had

outlived the partner of her choice, and who had survived the child on whom she leaned for comfort and support : their feelings would be in unison — they could sympathise in thoughts and sorrow known and felt by few.

CHAP. XXII.

Oft expectation fails, and most oft there
Where most it promises; and oft it hits
Where hope is coldest, and despair most sits.

All's Well that Ends Well.

DACRE's journey was rapid: he thought not of rest, for he knew there was no rest for him; and day and night he travelled on. Every arrangement was left to his servant: scarcely a word passed his lips, from the hour in which he had learnt the dreadful tidings of her death: not a book was opened; no object could for a

moment cheat his mind of grief, for the vision of Emily was never absent from his thoughts : Emily in life — Emily in death, was ever before him ; and, ere another day and night were over, his countenance bore the deep traces of sorrow that would dispute with time their power to mark and alter man.

The desire to avoid all accidental meetings with any of his acquaintance, determined him to avoid Paris, and to cross from Dieppe to Brighton. It was late in the day when he landed ; the weather was not propitious, and there were but few to watch the landing of the passengers. Dacre was walking up the beach when he perceived two or three servants dressed in livery, which he well remembered, and which, indeed, was too peculiar to be easily forgotten. As he looked towards them, one of them touched his hat : it was the same footman who had lived

with the Duchess of Bolton, at the time when he had been a daily visiter at Bolton House ; and the man recognised him. Dacre approached him, and enquired if the duchess was at Brighton. The servant said yes, and told him where she lived.

“ Can you tell me,” continued Dacre, almost choking as he spoke ; “ can you tell me where Lady Kendal is ? ”

“ My Lady is here also,” replied another servant who stood within hearing. The servant was dressed in deep mourning.

“ I hope Lady Kendal is well,” said Dacre, scarcely able to sustain himself as he asked the question.

“ Her Ladyship is as well as can be expected,” replied the same man.

Dacre walked on. How revolting to him appeared that cold conventional reply, that

serves alike to screen the mimic woe which custom has compelled, and to shroud the sufferings that would shrink from notice. Dacre had proceeded but a very few steps, when the Duchess of Bolton's servant followed him, saying, " Her Grace is at home, I believe, Sir, if you wish to see her."

Dacre paused for a moment. He doubted whether he could command himself at once sufficiently for such an interview ; but he knew by past experience the kindness he was sure to meet with from her. Delay could give no comfort. He enquired the way to the duchess's house, and then followed the servant who offered to show it him. The footman had knocked at the door : Dacre saw it open ; saw him speak to the servant who had opened it. He saw that he was to be admitted, and he almost repented his resolution of thus calling upon the duchess

without preparation. He knew how deeply she would have grieved, how affectionately she would have mourned the loss of Emily; and he feared the sight of him might too rudely renew feelings she must have endured; but it was too late to retreat. The duchess was at home—he mounted the stairs—the drawing-room door was thrown open—his name was announced. The duchess was not there. The servant instantly retreated to seek for her in the adjoining apartment. He advanced a few steps in the room: a lady was reclining on the sofa. She turned her head on hearing him advance. A shriek of surprise burst from her lips. She sprang to her feet; and Dacre held in his arms the living, though now the hardly conscious, Emily!

“Can this be true?” said Dacre, in a low, hurried voice; and he gazed upon her, as though

he doubted the reality of what he saw. "Emily ! speak to me, dearest ! tell me it is not a dream !"

"Did you, then, receive a letter ?" said Emily, withdrawing herself from his hold.

"I did—I did !" replied Dacre ; "and, oh ! the misery I have endured !" and he covered his face with his hands, as though he would have hid from his view the recollection of his suffering.

Emily burst into tears. "What must you think of me ?" said she. "That letter was never meant to reach you till I had breathed my last."

"Have you been in danger ?" enquired Dacre, looking anxiously on her pale but lovely countenance.

"Yes," replied Emily, "they thought my recovery hopeless ; but it was no fault of mine that you received that letter. Under the excitement of fever, my mind dwelt on that letter.

I told my mother and Caroline that it must be sent to you. At first they thought it was delirium; but I told them where to find it, and they looked for it. They found it where I had said: they found it directed to you, with an injunction that it should be opened by none but yourself; and they determined to forward it to you. It was not till some days after it was gone, that I was sufficiently myself to understand the dreadful error I had committed."

Dacre folded her to his heart: but there was no time for reply, for the duchess was already in the room.

The tale of joy is soon told; and it needed but few words in explanation of the happiness he had brought with his return. Emily quitted the room, to prepare her mother for this sudden change. Dacre related to the duchess his meeting with her footman, and the alarming confirm-

ation of his belief in Emily's death, which was afforded by the dress and answer of Lady Kendal's servant.

"The Dowager Lady Kendal is recently dead," replied the duchess; "and I suppose he gave you the unmeaning answer which he had been desired to give to those who send for form, and not for information."

The duke and Lady Kendal returned: but we must not intrude upon the happiness of that group; it was too new—too pure—too deep—for vulgar gaze.

The news arrived at Rome of the intended marriage of Dacre and Lady Emily Somers. And how did Mrs. Ashby bear this downfall to her maternal schemes? Like an able general, she made a skilful retreat. She smiled, and said the marriage was hardly news to them. The plan succeeded; and malicious gossips were de-

ceived and discomfited to find that, instead of "the forsaken," Miss Ashby was the "confidante."

Cecilia was allowed, unchecked, to flirt with young Fitzgerald; and, unlike George Saville, he wound up matters by the offer of his empty hand. Mrs. Ashby sincerely regretted that it was so empty, but she rejoiced to think that half her labours would be over if one of the girls were married: and so she talked disinterestedly; declaimed against worldliness; and, with all possible attention to the bridal costume, and with tears in her eyes to think how long it might be ere Julia would follow her sister's example, she witnessed the solemnization of her daughter's marriage at the house of the British Minister at Naples.

From Crofton Dacre received a letter of congratulation. Of the papers he had sent him he

made no mention ; but the letter was replete with good wishes for his happiness, and Dacre was too happy to be angry.

Crofton was indeed one of those against whom it was difficult to feel the full indignation that his conduct deserved. He was totally devoid of honour ; but he was clever—he was amusing—and he was good-natured. A want of principle had made him extravagant, and the distress arising from his reckless course had made him unscrupulous ; but with Dacre he had been often sincere in his expressions of regard. The luxurious sensualist is, of necessity, selfish ; and, though he would have done any thing else to serve him, he could not afford to be honest, as *that* would have cost the sacrifice of self. But concealment was over ; and, as Crofton was too much accustomed to transactions of at least a doubtful character to look with

much shame on those with Harper, and as he was too much hampered with engagements and debts to regret the property he must forego, he really was glad that honour and wealth should have fallen upon Dacre. Dacre replied to his letter, and there their intercourse ended. No arrears were demanded, and Crofton found a yearly sum was paid anonymously into his banker's hands for his use. He did not enquire from whence it came; and none but himself, the banker, and the person by whom it was given, knew of its payment.

But we must return to England, and see how other of our friends have received the intelligence of the approaching marriage. Sir Edward Bradford was the first to whom Dacre announced the glad tidings of his joy, and Sir Edward sympathised with the disinterested kindness of a generous mind. He had so entirely

given up all hopes of success for himself, that he had now almost ceased to think of Emily with the feelings of a lover ; and Mrs. Wentworth is not without hope that her brother has turned his thoughts elsewhere. Who will not rejoice at his enjoyment of the domestic ties he so well deserved ?

Lady Whitby is quite satisfied ; for, since Mr. Dacre has become Lord Hexham, she feels the elevation to Miss Ashby would have been too great.

Mr. Maitland is just come from the conveyancer ; and, having nearly ascertained the particulars of the settlement, he is going his rounds to impart as truth in detail his partial information.

Lady Henry Mansel has addressed a most useful letter to Emily, containing the names and addresses of all the *Marchandes de modes* “ to

whom one can really trust for taste and judgment;" and Mr. Preston has offered to assist Dacre in the choice of the jewels, of which, without vanity, he piques himself on being somewhat of a connoisseur.

Lady Anne has said all that is most flattering on the occasion to the parties concerned — all that is least so to others. Lord Clermont is just about to be married. And, alas! Lady Anne begins to be soured by the continual mortifications to which her vanity gives rise.

The time approaches when the ceremony is to be performed, and the Molesworths are daily expected. It was fortunate that Dacre's name had been duly inscribed by his servant in the *Livre des Voyageurs*; for it was thus the Molesworths first learnt that one of that name had passed through on his way from Italy; and they determined to proceed no fur-

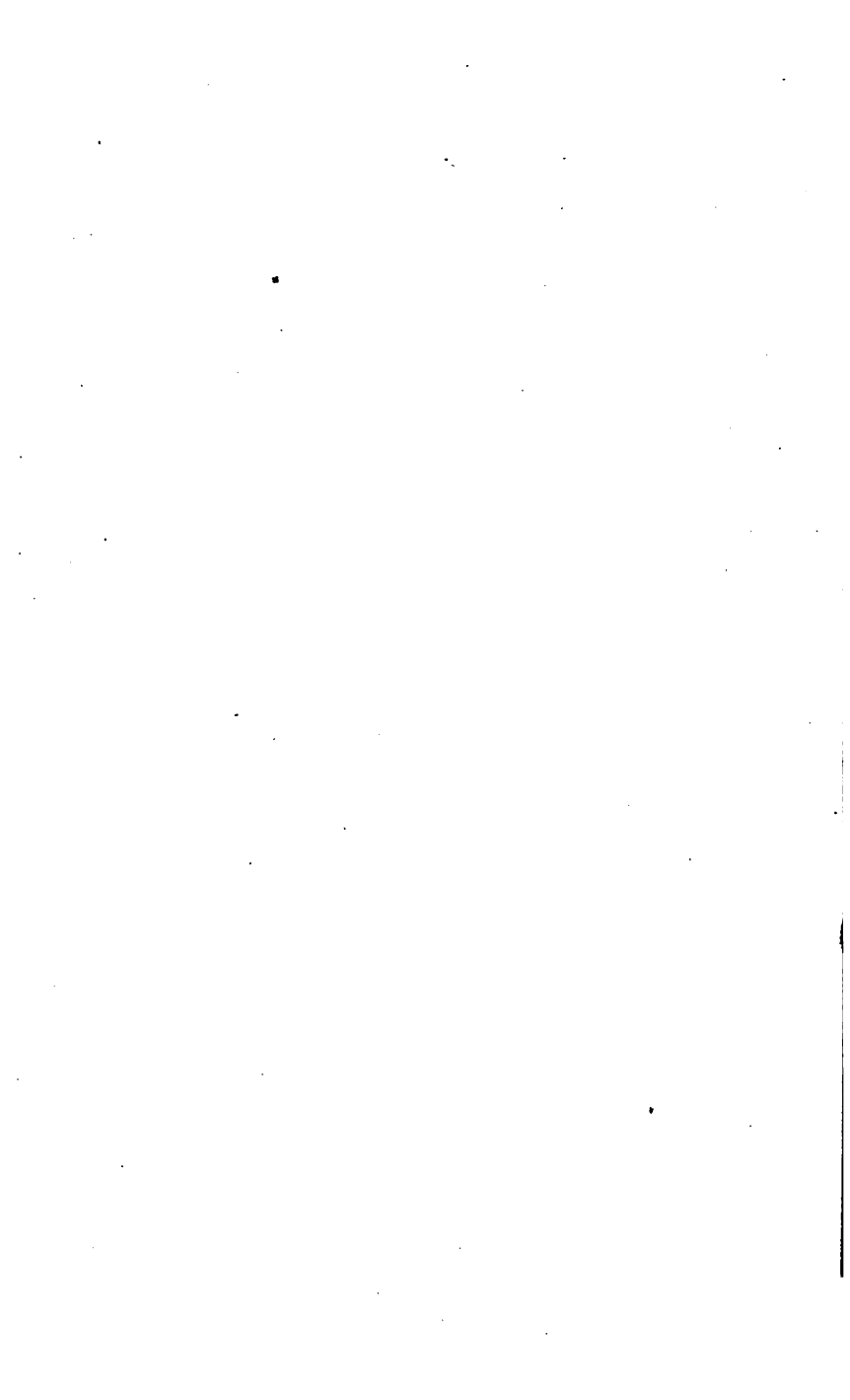
ther till they could ascertain whether Dacre had really returned to England. The duchess had written to Mary; and her letter at once decided the doubt, and determined their movements. And now the Molesworths are added to the wedding guests, who await with friendly impatience the union of Dacre and Emily.

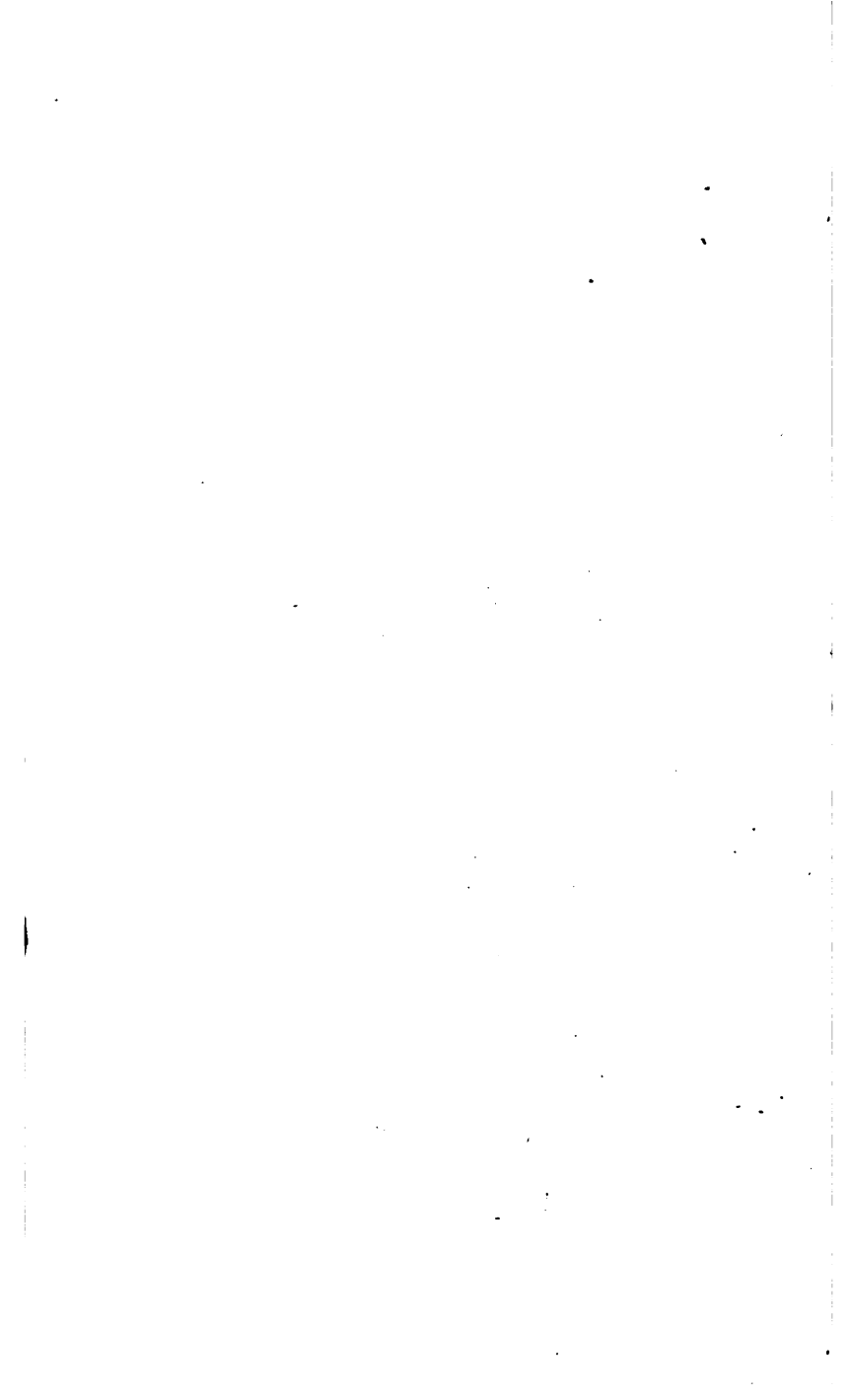
The day is fixed, the hour come; and they who had been bound by all the ties of constancy and love, now kneel before the altar to sanctify those bonds. Who could think, without emotion, on all the trials they had endured? who could look unmoved on the prospect of happiness that was now spread before them? Their sorrows had been great; but it seemed at this moment that sorrow had strengthened their feelings to magnify joy. The shade of thought it had cast on their minds had given them the power to reflect on their bliss, and to give in-

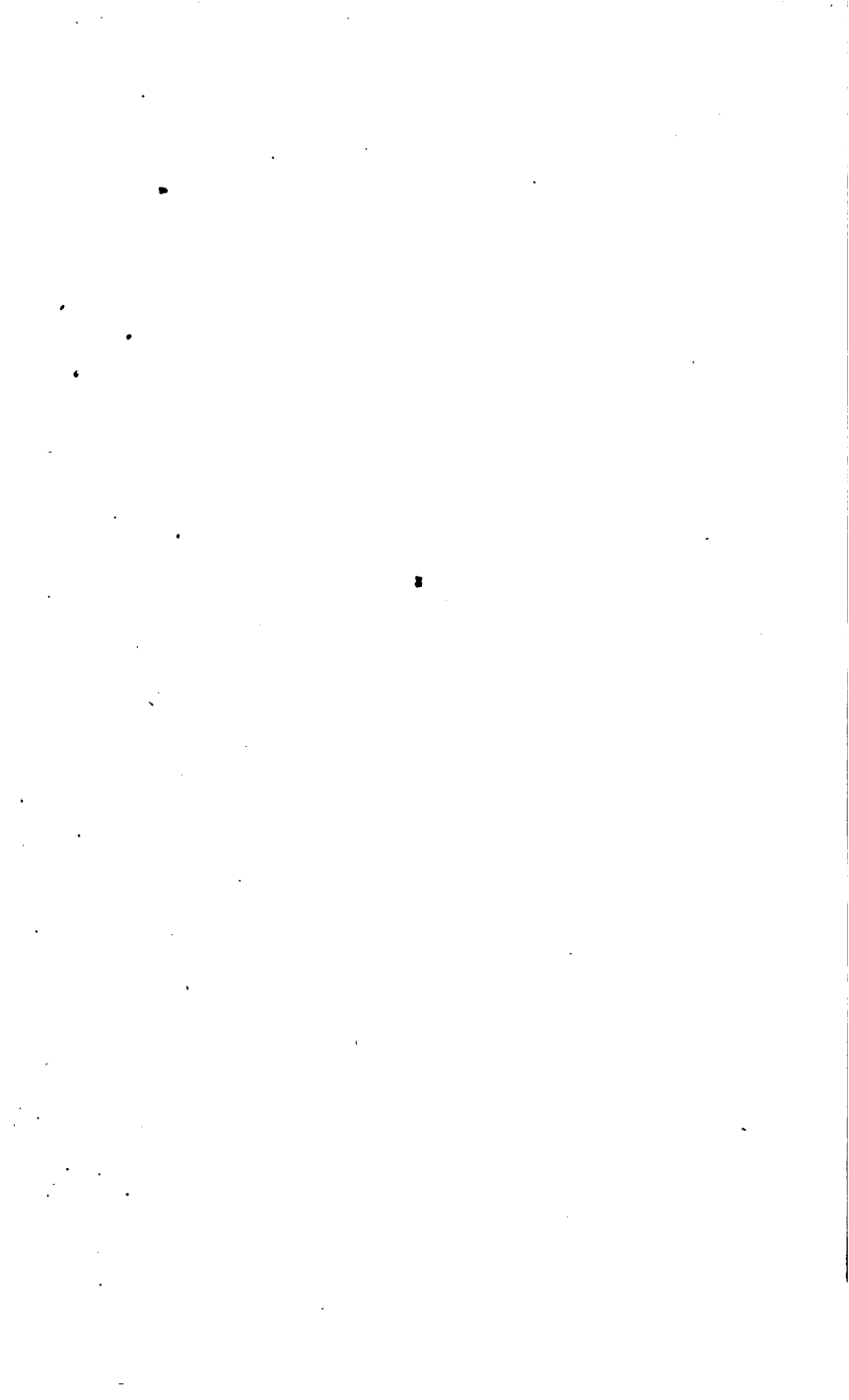
tensity to happiness, which gaiety would have weakened. Dacre pressed her to his heart. He called her by the sacred name of wife. She felt an earthly paradise was gained, and she was right; for they had entered upon that garden by the path which brings no poison to destroy its beauty, or dispel its fragrance. They had not been lured and dazzled by some bright, easy road, which leads to gloom and disappointment; but they had struggled through the rugged way which was overshadowed by suffering and sorrow, to burst at once upon that sunny scene of many-coloured beauty. They could taste the happiness of unbounded confidence, and the mutual dependence which springs from mutual love. They could feel the joy, that in all things they were one, save in self love — *that* was exchanged for the love of each other.

THE END.

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